FRANCIS ASBURY'S EPISCOPAL ORDINATION, BY BISHOP COKE, RICHARD WHATCOAT, THOMAS VASEY, AND WILLIAM PHILIP OTTERBEIN,

THE

MAKING OF METHODISM:

STUDIES IN THE

GENESIS OF INSTITUTIONS.

BY

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"*First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear.*"—Mark iv. 28.

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To My Father,

John James Tigert, Sr.,

Who, for Half a Century, has Wisely and Tenderly Discharged
the Duties of Class Leader and Steward;
Who, for a Score of Years, has been the Considerate and
Affectionate Parent of My Household; and
Who, in Age and Feebleness Extreme, Abides
with Us at Fourscore Years;

THIS VOLUME IS

GRATEFULLY AND LOVINGLY DEDICATED.

PREFACE.

THE last quarter of the seventeenth, and the first decade of the eighteenth, century were needed for building the cathedral church of the metropolis of the world. Though thus a church of two centuries, it is a building of but one generation; for throughout the period of its erection there were but one master-builder, one architect, and one bishop of the diocese. While St. Paul's was in building there was born in England the architect, master-builder, and bishop of another London ecclesiastical edifice—a building of God, a spiritual house not made with hands, whose materials were living stones—who, though he lived nearly across the eighteenth century, did not live long enough to finish the work he began. The Making of Methodism is a work of the generations for the generations; and, since to-day it probably occupies the position of the first Protestantism of the world, it is beginning to look as if it might prove the Church of the Centuries.

To students it is becoming increasingly evident that the history of Methodism in America, especially in its beginnings, must sooner or later be critically reconstructed and rewritten. It is not that Abel Stevens does not richly deserve recognition as the Macaulay of Methodism, or Bishop McTyeire as its Tacitus. It is not that writers earlier than Stevens—I refer particularly to Jesse Lee—did not collect and preserve invaluable materials and render other useful service. It is not that some later writers have not made careful studies and embodied them in more or less trustworthy monographs and general works. But it is that there have been slowly collecting the materials for a more comprehensive and exhaustive presentation of the history according to the philosophical and causal principles of its development; for the correction of errors and

misconceptions, some of them grown hoary and stubborn by long unchallenged acceptance; for freeing the narrative from one-sided controversial elements; for more accurately and minutely tracing the genesis of the government of the Church, and the unfolding of the organic principles of fundamental law, purely in the light of the abundant contemporary sources; for filling in details in the biographies of the itinerant heroes who planted Methodism in the wilderness and made it bloom as the garden of the Lord; and, in fine, for occupying a new and higher historical standpoint from which a better outlook over the whole field can be secured, putting all the objects of the vast panorama in something like their true proportion and perspective.

As a contribution to the correct construction of our governmental history this volume is intended. The chapters which follow have occupied me at intervals through a period of three years, receiving from time to time the best attention I could give them. Though some of them were written under the pressure of various and somewhat exacting editorial duties, there has been in every case opportunity for review of the positions taken and of the foundations upon which they rest. I have endeavored to imitate the example of the workman who, in the pause at the railway station, taps the car-wheel with his hammer. While my readers may discern abundant traces of infirmity and fallibility in these pages, I cannot tax myself with haste or carelessness in their composition and publication. I prefer, nevertheless, to have these papers looked upon as historical studies; though the conclusions reached are deliberate and, I think, not unworthy of attention.

Some new ground has been broken. Some features in the development of the presiding eldership have perhaps been more distinctly traced, if not placed in a new light: taken in connection with what I have tried to present elsewhere, the materials now exist for an orderly and complete history of this

important arm of our service. No former attempt has been made at a critical catalogue of the sources of the history of the Christmas Conference—the forerunner of a similar catalogue of all the editions of the Methodist Discipline, in both Episcopal Methodisms, for which I have nearly completed the materials. Some aspects, at least, of the history of the Christmas Conference, *e. g.*, the exact occasion and circumstances that gave birth to the body in the call of the preachers at Barratt's, are here more exhaustively treated, with a more careful basing of the narrative exclusively on the sources, than by any historian with whose work I am acquainted. I think that most critical students will probably agree that the question of the "lost minutes" of the Christmas Conference is about laid: at least the investigation here made approximately exhausts the state of the evidence, and cancels this hypothetical factor in the present reconstruction of the history. In the earlier chapters, covering more familiar ground, citations of the evidence are not so uniformly given; but in these cases, also, readers who care to investigate will generally find that the paragraphs, and often the very sentences and phrasing, rest immediately on unimpeachable sources. My constant aim has been to make the discussions intelligible, constructive, and conclusive, and of equal interest to special students and general readers; in short, to all who have an interest in tracing the growth of Methodism.

During the writing of this book, official duty, as well as inclination, has led me to wide reading in general history: I have been more than ever impressed with the study of history —the investigation of historical problems, and the weighing of historical evidence—as perhaps the most valuable of mental disciplines. It is at the opposite pole from the reasonings of mathematics and pure logic, within whose demonstrative pale so little of practical human interest can be brought. Bishop Butler was among the first, not only to gauge the value of

probable reasoning for the evidences of religion, but also to seize upon its unique worth as an element of mental discipline —nay, as a characteristic and distinguishing feature of moral probation itself. Similarly, the successful study of history requires or produces an elevated position, a broad horizon, a delicate and sensitive poise of the faculties, which must be sheltered from controversial gusts, a serious and impartial judgment, an intellectually sympathetic and hospitable nature, a clear rational collocation of conditions, and a firm passage from causes to effects. Of the greatness of my deficiencies in all these respects, no one can be more painfully aware than myself, especially as from my youth my natural bent has been toward purely philosophical studies. But I must be permitted to say that, in reading such books, for example, as Harnack's History of Dogma—involved and perplexing as the style often is—my spirit has at times been raised to a pitch of admiration and enthusiasm that was little short of transporting. To watch the accurate, complete, and beautiful manner with which pertinent scraps of evidence are brought together from the four quarters of the earth, until there is a reconstruction before one's very eyes of the opinions and influence of sometimes obscure men, sects, and parties, of whom the literary monuments are few and scant, affords a sublimer exhibition of human skill than is involved in the most delicate or the most ponderous mechanical creations, or even in the putting together of fins and wings and bones until the extinct fishes, birds, and beasts of long past geological ages are made to take their places in our scientific catalogues. I shall not be misunderstood, therefore, I trust, if I venture to acknowledge that some high ideals have dimly and distantly floated before my mind while writing these pages, and that with an increasing sense of responsibility I have put pen to paper. In particular, it is with no disrespect for the later historians that I have very generally neglected their labors, and sought to draw the history directly, purely, and objectively

from the sources. If I have missed the way, I have no one but myself to blame, as I have chosen to plunge into the forest with little help from guides or guideposts.

These sources, with two or three exceptions, it is unnecessary to enumerate here, as they are sufficiently indicated in the volume. I wish, however, to express my personal obligations to the Rev. David J. Waller, D.D., for the courtesy and generosity with which he delivered into my official custody a complete set of the "Minutes of the Methodist Conferences" (British) from 1744 to 1896—thirty-nine stoutly-bound volumes in all. These books have been of no slight service to me, and pass into the editorial library of the Publishing House as a fertile deposit for the years to come. I have also made use of a collection of Methodist Disciplines which, with the help of my friend, Mr. R. T. Miller, of Covington, Ky., may fairly be described as complete. I am particularly indebted to Brother Miller, who is a member of the Federation Commission of the Methodist Episcopal Church, for the use of the original Disciplines of 1784 (the first) and of 1787—of which he owns one of the only two copies known to be in existence. All the passages in this volume which were first taken from reprints, have been carefully collated with the originals of 1784 and 1787, "that," as Brother Miller says in a private letter, "you may be able to state that you have seen and compared what you have reproduced with the originals, and that, of your own knowledge, your reproduction is correct." For this kindness I here express my grateful thanks to Brother Miller. I am safe in saying that no previous writer on Methodist history has had at his command a collection of Disciplines comparable with my own thus supplemented: of them I have endeavored to make constant and judicious use. I have also used a collection of Sunday Services completed, with the help of Mr. Miller, to a point where they cease to be of importance for my present purposes: the first edition, 1784; the second edition, 1786 (both American); the third edition, 1788 (British); the fourth edi-

tion, 1792 (both the American and the British editions);[1] and the fifth edition, 1816 (British).

Though this preface is already too long—embracing matter which perhaps might better have gone into the volume, but for which I did not find a place—I desire to acknowledge the efficient and constant aid unstintedly given me by my assistant, Mr. John L. Kirby, whose journalistic and typographical experience, reaching back more than thirty years to his association with Mr. Geo. D. Prentice on the staff of the Louisville *Journal*, has contributed to the accuracy and dispatch of all my literary work for three years past.

JNO. J. TIGERT.

NASHVILLE, 2 *February*, 1898.

[1] In explanation of this distinction I ought to add that in 1788 and 1792, and almost certainly in 1786 also, both American and English editions of the Sunday Service or Prayer-book were published. In the English editions the XXIIId Article of Religion differs wholly from the American Article, reading as follows:

XXIII. OF THE RULERS OF THE BRITISH DOMINIONS.

The King's Majesty, with his Parliament, hath the chief power in all the British Dominions; unto whom the chief government of all estates in all causes doth appertain, and is not, nor ought to be, subject to any foreign jurisdiction.

So the Article reads in the British editions of 1788 and 1792—p. 320 in both—which lie before me. It might be added that both of these British books contain the forms of ordination for Deacons, Elders, and Superintendents. They are of first-rate importance in determining the intentions of Mr. Wesley with regard to the relations of British and American Methodism. These distinguishing features of the British editions disappear after 1792. I think I may safely say that I am the first writer—at least on this side the Atlantic—to discover these books, and to appreciate their importance and use them.

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CHAPTER I.

The Episcopacy.

All the powers, and more, ever exercised by a Methodist bishop were exercised by John Wesley. He admitted to and excluded from his societies; he chose and removed stewards; he invited his helpers to meet him in consultation; he presided in the Conferences and fixed the appointments of the preachers; he received, changed, and suspended preachers according to his judgment; he traveled throughout Great Britain and Ireland superintending the spiritual and temporal business of the Connection; and he ordained deacons, presbyters, and bishops. Nothing has been introduced into Episcopal Methodism in America that did not exist in primitive Methodism in England under the government of its founder. All these things he did without the mandatory, and even without the concurrent, action of the Conference, except as he chose to consult its sentiments, and to follow its advice. Advance in America has been by reversion to the primitive type; in England there has been degeneration from the type.

Modern American Methodists have commonly supposed that only in a figure was Mr. Wesley a bishop; but, in view of the facts stated above, as well as some things which Mr. Wesley said of himself about a clear divine call and providential designation to the office and work of a scriptural bishop, it is not surprising that the American minutes of 1789 and 1790 number John Wesley among the persons that exercised the episcopal office in the Methodist Church in Europe and America.

In America the earliest adumbration of the general superintendency was in the person and duties of Thomas Rankin, the first general assistant for America. From 1773 to 1777 he exercised in America the same powers that Mr. Wesley did in England, except that he was under the direction of Mr

Wesley; that he did not administer sacraments or ordain, though the question was mooted whether he ought not to baptize; and that the Conference decided by vote many measures that were submitted to it. But when Mr. Asbury was first recognized as general assistant by the irregular Delaware Conference of 1779, the largest powers of Mr. Wesley in the control of Conference action were expressly bestowed upon him: after hearing the debate in Conference the right of determination rested with him. In 1780 it was decided by Asbury's irregular Conference that every traveling preacher must hold an annually renewed license signed by him. When reunion with the regular Conference in Virginia was effected in the same year, Mr. Asbury was requested to superintend the work at large; and in 1782 he was unanimously elected to preside over the American Conferences and the whole work. In 1783 his position is recognized or confirmed by Mr. Wesley, who forbids the American Conference to receive any English preachers who are reluctant to recognize Asbury's authority as general assistant. By the double tenure of Conference election and Mr. Wesley's confirmation Asbury holds office as the superintendent of the whole work when the Christmas Conference meets.

In September, 1784, Mr. Wesley ordained Thomas Coke, a presbyter of the Church of England, to the office of superintendent for the American work. He was not intended to supersede Asbury, but to be a joint superintendent with him. This third ordination Mr. Wesley justified on the ground (1) that by the clearest providential appointment he was himself as much a scriptural bishop as any man in Europe; (2) that no bishop at that time exercised any ecclesiastical jurisdiction in America; (3) that the three orders of bishops, presbyters, and deacons are plainly described, though not enjoined, in the New Testament; (4) that three grades of ministers generally obtained in the Churches of the apostolic age; (5) that the presbyters of the apostolic Church of Alexandria continued for two hundred years to ordain their own bishops; and (6) that the right of ordination to all grades of the ministry thus inhering in presbyters, he, being a Church-of-England presbyter, and divinely called and providentially designated to the office and work of a scriptural bishop, could rightfully proceed, and was, according to the law of an inexorable necessity (which Hooker

and many other Church-of-England authorities recognized as valid) in duty bound to proceed, to the ordination of Thomas Coke, a coequal presbyter of the same Church, to the episcopal office, and of Messrs. Whatcoat and Vasey as presbyters, they having first been ordained to the diaconate. This, it is believed, is as succinct and complete an analysis, from Mr. Wesley's own standpoint, as it is possible to give, every item of which can be, and has been, substantiated by direct and indubitable historical evidence. Within eight months of Coke's ordination Charles Wesley declared that he could scarcely yet believe it, that in his eighty-second year his brother had assumed the episcopal character, ordained elders, consecrated a bishop, and sent him to America to ordain others.

Bishop Coke was directed on his arrival in America to ordain Mr. Asbury deacon, elder, and superintendent according to the three ordination forms of the Church of England provided for the purpose, his own letters of episcopal orders from the hand of Mr. Wesley having declared that the Methodists of North America still adhered to the doctrines and discipline of the Church of England. Mr. Asbury refusing to act in the capacity of a superintendent by Mr. Wesley's appointment, without the unanimous choice of the preachers, the Christmas Conference was called on his motion, and it was agreed to form the American Methodists into an Episcopal Church, with superintendents, elders, and deacons. Dr. Coke and Mr. Asbury were unanimously elected to the superintendency, and on three successive days, December 25th, 26th, and 27th, 1784, Bishop Coke ordained Francis Asbury deacon, elder, and superintendent, being assisted by three elders at the third ordination. This was paralleled by the three successive ordinations which Mr. Wesley himself bestowed on Alexander Mather.

The exact method of the election of Asbury and the reception of Coke we do not know, as the original minutes of the Christmas Conference are not extant. But in 1789 the Annual Conferences, in which were many members who had sat in the Christmas Conference, and which, since the General Conference had not then been instituted, exercised full legislative powers, inserted in the Discipline substantially this account: that Wesley sent over three regularly ordained clergy, having set apart one of them to the episcopal office, delivered to

him letters of episcopal orders, and commissioned him to set apart Francis Asbury to the same episcopal office, after his ordination as deacon and elder; and that the Christmas Conference did unanimously receive these two persons as their bishops, being fully satisfied of the validity of their episcopal ordination.

These joint superintendents, for so Mr. Wesley designated them in the circular letter which was the basis of the work of the Christmas Conference, were empowered to ordain superintendents, elders, and deacons elected by the Conferences and approved by themselves; to preside in the Conferences; to fix the appointments of the preachers; to receive, change, or suspend preachers in the intervals of the Conferences; and to receive and decide appeals from preachers and people. They were rigidly responsible to the Conferences, which had power to expel them for improper conduct if they saw it necessary. When the Quadrennial General Conference was organized in 1792, and until 1808, their power, their usefulness, themselves were entirely at the mercy of the General Conference.

The superintendency in America differed from the beginning from the superintendency in England in that it was double-headed—one superintendency administered by two coördinate men. The one office is now (1895) administered by ten men in one branch of Episcopal Methodism and sixteen in another. Each of these has at all times in every place all the powers of the office. So far as constitutional law or statutory provision is concerned there is neither subordination of office nor division of powers among them. Nor does there exist outside of the office itself any provision short of constitutional reörganization, for the imposition of limitations upon, or the creation of divisions of duty, or diversities of administration, in the one office. The episcopal office or general superintendency is in the most unqualified sense *one;* and there exists no power in the Church, under its present constitution, to modify after any manner or in any degree this primary unity. Any division or subordination is of internal origin among the persons who for the time being administer the one office; and such adjustment has no higher sanction or more binding obligation than the mutual, voluntary agreements of these persons among themselves can give it. If a general principle is sought which should

serve as a sufficient warrant for such voluntary and temporary self-divestment of the powers of general superintendency over the whole Church on the part of any one person occupying with his colleagues the episcopal office, it would perhaps be found in this: that only the strictest necessities of administration could warrant it. Consequently the Church has acquiesced in the temporary assignment of episcopal districts, that is, a voluntary limitation of the general superintendency of any one bishop as to territory for the time being, because it is a strict necessity of administration from which there is no escape. There is, however, a history involving something of a struggle, by which this solution was finally reached. On the other hand, any attempt at the voluntary creation of permanent episcopal districts, that is, the temporal as well as the territorial limitation of the general superintendency of any one bishop, would doubtless be resisted by the Church, because unwarranted by the exigencies of actual administration.

Such an office and such officers are unparalleled in the history of ecclesiastical government. In the peculiar characteristic we have been analyzing lie both its weakness and its strength, its danger and its safety. From this standpoint the episcopal office contains within itself the law of its own life and the law of its own death; it is self-preservative and self-destructive. Its freedom from difference and dissension; its harmony of counsel and unity of wise and energetic action, are a *conditio sine qua non*, not only of its efficiency, but of its very life. Should these characteristics be permanently lost, the office, as it has existed, must perish. It is almost safe to predict that it will never become extinct in any other manner. But if, on the other hand, self-preservation is more than the first law of life, namely, its constant and invariable instinct, this very fact is a surer guarantee than any law imposed from without could possibly be of the perpetuity of the office. The episcopal office as known in American Methodism is as sensitively responsive in its self-regulation and as certainly self-preservative as any governmental machine that has ever been devised by the wit of man.

From the *a priori* standpoint this would not have been supposed. So complex and unprecedented an arrangement as the administration of one office by many coördinate officers, with

so little explicit statute and so much latitude for individual judgment and action, would have been prejudged a failure. The experience of one hundred and ten years demonstrates the contrary. But the conditions of its successful operation, after its original projection, were not the offspring of a moment. They were a growth. That growth let us study.

Under the resolution of submission adopted by the Christmas Conference, Mr. Wesley contended for a special and independent control of the general superintendents of American Methodism, which extended in his judgment, it is said, to their removal from the continent. However great or little the power claimed, the whole of it was swept away in an instant and forever in 1787, when the resolution of submission was repealed, and Mr. Wesley's name was for the time left off the minutes, and his nominees for the episcopal office were rejected. Trouble nevermore arose from this source.

The very nature of the episcopal office in Methodism seems to imply its incumbency by the fewest possible number of men who can administer it with efficiency in the general oversight of the whole Church. Notwithstanding the obvious solicitations to a contrary course, this principle, which has never been embodied in constitution or statute, has governed all the General Conferences of the Church from the beginning. From 1784 to 1816, almost a third of a century, there were really never more than two contemporary bishops; first Coke and Asbury; then Asbury and Whatcoat; and finally Asbury and McKendree. Coke's active (though from the beginning intermittent) superintendency terminated with his return to Europe in the spring of 1798, though he came to America to preside in the General Conferences of 1800 and 1804. Both of those bodies, as well as the General Conference of 1808, consented, with various provisos and conditions, to his residence in Europe. Asbury had Whatcoat for a colleague from 1800 to the latter's death in 1806; and McKendree occupied the same relation from his election in 1808 to Asbury's death in 1816.

From 1784 to 1808 the office, as well as the officers, was at the mercy, first of the Annual Conferences, from 1785 to 1792, and then of the Quadrennial General Conference, from 1792 to 1808. Though several of these unlimited and supreme General Conferences had before them various questions and measures

touching the superintendency of Bishop Coke, it is sufficient to observe here that all of them treated him with the utmost personal consideration, and that he was never for a moment disqualified for the performance of any of his episcopal duties when present in America to discharge them.

Upon Coke and Asbury devolved the practical task of first solving the problem of the actual administration of one office by two coördinate officers. There is evidence, besides Asbury's own writings, that his general bearing toward Coke was that of the utmost deference. It was the habit of the two bishops to attend all the Annual Conferences in company whenever Coke was in the United States. Division of the work seemed neither necessary nor desirable. In Coke's absence Asbury discharged alone all the episcopal duties. He always conceded the presidential chair of an Annual Conference to Coke when he was present. In 1787, at Charleston, at the first session of the South Carolina Conference, Asbury, though opposed to the action, acquiesced when Dr. Coke proposed Richard Whatcoat's name from the chair as Mr. Wesley's nominee for the episcopacy, and the Conference elected him. It is probable that Asbury generally exerted a controlling influence in making the appointments, since he alone enjoyed personal familiarity with the work and the workmen. There was, however, consultation with Coke, who seldom or never held a Conference without the presence of Asbury. The nature of the business, as well as the state of his health, necessitated Asbury's retirement during much of the General Conference of 1792, and Asbury refers expressly to Coke's presidency; we find Coke presiding in 1796, also, until the nature of the business brought about his retirement in turn; in 1800, though there were three bishops after the election of Whatcoat, the journal is attested by the single signature of "T. Coke, *President;*" and in 1804 Coke, as senior bishop, so Quinn tells us, presided. Thus the idea of rotation among the bishops in the presidency of the General Conference had not been suggested, Coke alone being almost exclusively president. Contemporary bishops were so few that the custom of rotation did not obtain until quite late in the history of General Conferences.

That the nature of the office and the relations of the officers among themselves were not regarded as permanently settled

in the period from 1792 to 1808 is evident from several sources. In 1797 Asbury nominated Lee, Poythress, and Whatcoat to the Annual Conferences for "assistant bishops." Permanent coördination of new bishops with himself Asbury seemed as yet not to regard as feasible or desirable. Before the election of Whatcoat in 1800 various modifications of the new bishop's powers were proposed in the General Conference, all of which were promptly and decisively rejected. Coke moved that the new bishop when presiding in the absence of Asbury should read the draft of appointments once in Conference for suggestion and amendment before their final announcement. This, though the English plan, the Americans did not care to vote upon, and it was withdrawn. Stationing committees of three or four to be appointed by the Conference, to advise or to decide appointments, were rejected; and the new bishop was left in every respect on a perfect parity with Asbury. Thus was more clearly defined and fixed the "plan of itinerant general superintendency" which was to be embodied in the constitution of 1808.

Asbury and Whatcoat followed the old rule of attending all the Conferences in company, which was so general that the General Conference had thought it unnecessary to make it mandatory. Asbury, doubtless, usually occupied the chair, and the two bishops made the appointments after consultation together, in which it is natural to suppose Asbury exerted a decisive influence. Despite his legal parity with Asbury, Whatcoat was practically little more than an "assistant bishop."

In 1805 Coke proposed to come to America on the express condition that the seven Conferences should be divided between himself and Asbury, four and three, and three and four, each exchanging with the other annually. This is the earliest foreshadowing of the present plan of episcopal districts of annual tenure. But it also indicates that despite the equality which the General Conference had bestowed upon Whatcoat, his position was practically so subordinate or indefinite that Coke makes no mention of him, probably supposing that he would by turns assist both the older bishops as he was then assisting Asbury.

In 1807, after the death of Whatcoat, a scheme originated in the New York Conference, and was approved by the New En-

gland, the Western, and the South Carolina Conferences, for forty-nine electors, seven from each of the seven Conferences, who should meet at Baltimore on July 4 to organize and establish a permanent superintendency of the Methodist Episcopal Church. At this period it is evident that little connected with the superintendency was regarded as organized, established, or permanent. Not only could any General Conference overturn the office, but the Annual Conferences assumed to be fully competent to remodel it at will. Precipitation and crystallization occurred in 1808.

At this time the constitution was established. It excepted episcopacy and the plan of itinerant general superintendency from statutory modification by the General Conference. Asbury was now the sole occupant of the episcopal office itinerating in America. McKendree was elected his colleague, and Asbury and he resumed at once the now established rule of attending all the Annual Conferences in company. McKendree was a man of high understanding and pronounced character, and perfectly aware from the beginning of his constitutional equality with Asbury. He always shared in the public presidency of the Conferences. As late as 1811, however, Asbury was able to attend all the Conferences in a single year; though, as his infirmities increased, and his confidence grew in McKendree's wisdom and really great executive abilities, he gradually relinquished the presidential chair to him, and confined himself to the work of making the appointments. Not until 1815, at the session of the Tennessee Conference, did Asbury "resign the stations" wholly to McKendree. So far as appointments were concerned, up to their last round before Asbury's death, McKendree suffered the senior bishop to prepare the preliminary draft; he then made such changes as seemed necessary after consultation with the elders in council. Asbury refused to the last to depend upon the advice of these officers in "cabinet." On the other hand, McKendree refused as early as 1811 to make the final revision of the appointments furnished by Asbury without the aid of the presiding elders. He became thus the originator of the "cabinet," which rests to this day on the basis of general usage.

In 1816, Asbury having died, George and Roberts were added to the board of bishops. For the first time in the history of the Church, there were three active contemporary

bishops. Up to this time not even a temporary division of the Conferences into what are now called episcopal districts had ever been effected. McKendree, George, and Roberts divided the work among themselves, though McKendree strongly leaned to their continuing as much in company in the discharge of their duties as the nature of the work would allow. From McKendree's journal it appears that the following principles were accepted by the three bishops: (1) the necessary division of the Conferences among the three constitutional superintendents; (2) the annual exchange of districts among the bishops; (3) the responsible presidency of the bishop to whom a Conference was assigned; and (4) the attendance of all or any of the bishops as counselors or assistants at such Conferences as they could reach beyond the limits of their own districts. All of these principles, except, perhaps, the last, are now generally accepted. Whether the more formal recognition of the fourth is not desirable is, at least, a question. We have now general superintendents in the third quadrennium of their episcopal supervision who have not yet visited officially all the Annual Conferences in the United States. The personal familiarity of each superintendent with the entire work and all the workmen of the vast itinerant field is certainly desirable. This familiarity ought to be acquired as speedily as possible. Visiting bishops seldom appear at the Annual Conferences. It must be that difficult and delicate questions often arise in which the president of the Conference would gladly consult with a colleague if he were at hand. The administration could often be unified and strengthened. It seems to have been a principle generally accepted for a half-century as implied in the very nature of the episcopal office that every bishop was in duty bound to be present at all the Annual Conferences which his own special duties would permit him to reach. If this plan should at present be regarded as too onerous, or, on any ground undesirable, it might still be feasible and beneficial for each bishop to be assigned, in the plan of episcopal visitations, not only to his own proper episcopal district, but also to one other district, as the companion and adviser of a colleague, who would still remain the responsible president of his own Conferences.

CHAPTER II.

The Episcopacy (Continued).

In the preceding chapter it was intimated that the now universally accepted plan of episcopal districts of annual tenure, though a most simple and necessary solution of the problem of one joint, itinerant, general superintendency administered by many bishops, was not reached and adopted without something of a struggle. McKendree's hesitation in 1816, when such a division was first made, is evident. That hesitancy doubtless rested on a latent constitutional scruple. In 1820, when the plan had been operated for a quadrennium by McKendree, George, and Roberts, Joshua Soule, author and rigid constructionist of the constitution, gravely doubted its constitutionality. There were other perplexities besides the elective presiding eldership, unconstitutionally ordained and then suspended by the General Conference of that year, which involved him in a torrent of difficulties and quite drank up his spirit. In a letter which Mr. Soule addressed at this time to Bishop McKendree concerning his own refusal to accept the episcopal office, to which he had been elected, occur the following significant sentences which have hitherto escaped notice and comment: "I have seriously reflected on the subject of a *partial* (sectional) visitation of the Conferences. I have attempted to analyze this in relation to our plan of itinerant general superintendency, and I perceive a dissonance which I cannot harmonize. I apprehend that my path, should I proceed, would inevitably lead me to a point where I should be at issue with my predecessors and seniors in office." That is to say, a voluntary, even though temporary, relinquishment of episcopal duty and prerogative, in that continuous oversight of the whole Church, to which every superintendent is chosen by the General Conference, without restriction of any sort (and, indeed,

without the constitutional possibility of such restriction), seemed to Mr. Soule, at the end of the first quadrennium of the now established usage of divided episcopal oversight and responsibility, unconstitutional. These duties and responsibilities imposed by the General Conference, he doubted the right of any individual bishop to surrender; and this difficulty was among the complications that caused Mr. Soule to decline episcopal ordination in 1820. Another quadrennium of the smooth and efficient working of the new plan by the three bishops who had felt obliged by the practical exigencies of administration to inaugurate it, together with the continued acquiescence of the entire Church, removed Mr. Soule's constitutional scruple. His questions were silenced at last only by the inexorable principle that necessity knows no law; and, after his election and ordination in 1824, he was not brought into collision with his senior colleagues, as he had feared would be the case had he become a bishop in 1820; for, from that time forward, it was an evident impossibility for all the bishops to attend all the Conferences. For many years afterwards—certainly to a period later than the division of the Church—it was the custom for all the bishops present to share the presidency of an Annual Conference, and to enter the stationing room to assist in making the appointments of the preachers. It may indeed be questioned, as was suggested in the last chapter, whether the spirit of the constitution, which ordains joint, itinerant, general superintendency, does not suggest, according to Soule's constitutional scruple, the presence of disengaged superintendents at the seat of such Annual Conferences as they can reach.

At the close of the General Conference of 1824 there were five general superintendents: McKendree, George, Roberts, Soule, and Hedding. This number introduced a complexity which it is evident, in the view of the General Conference, created a considerable strain on the theory and practice of the general superintendency as it had hitherto existed. Some members believed the Conference was authorized to divide the Church into episcopal districts for the quadrennium; but Dr. William Winans, of Mississippi, vindicated the constitutional view in a thrilling speech. The Conference, on recommendation of the episcopal committee, adopted a resolution recommending an annual bishops' meeting (whose prime object

seems to have been to unify the whole episcopal administration), and allowing the bishops a choice between two suggested plans: (1) the division of the Church into several "episcopal departments," with one or more bishops in each; or (2) to form a plan of traveling through the Church "in a circuit after each other"—language which was evidently meant to describe the plan hitherto pursued.

All the bishops did not understand this action alike. Throughout the ensuing quadrennium George and Hedding rode the northern circuit and Roberts and Soule the southern, while McKendree, though the senior and superannuated, was the sole *general* superintendent of the whole Church in the sense in which Asbury had understood and exercised it. This plan was virtually the adoption of the first alternative suggested by the General Conference, and the evils of sectional episcopal visitation began immediately to appear. McKendree by no means concurred in the new order of things, and urged with all proper vehemence that the bishops on the northern circuit should exchange with those on the southern. Bishop George, on the other hand, declared that "visiting all the Conferences and becoming jointly responsible" was to him a "new thought," and believed that the plan of episcopal visitation adopted in 1824 was for the quadrennium, as the labor of a continental superintendency was to him insupportable. He seems to have been under the impression that the General Conference had authorized the restriction of the episcopal powers of the several bishops to the "departments" to which they were temporarily assigned; for, when McKendree and Soule visited Philadelphia in 1826, to attend the first bishops' meeting ever held, George, who, with Hedding, was holding the Conference, ignored the presence of McKendree and Soule in their official character, unaccountably failing to invite either of them to share in the public presidency of the Conference or to enter the stationing room to assist in making the appointments. This conduct was not only disrespectful to the senior bishop, to say nothing of Bishop Soule, but, according to the views and usages which had universally prevailed, was a serious breach of the constitution, since, in a sense, the failure of Bishop George to recognize the visiting bishops in their official character was an attempt on the part of a bishop to impose limitations upon the

joint superintendency of his colleagues in the episcopal office. Bishop George's position was a novelty in episcopal administration. While its explanation is probably to be sought, in part at least, in Bishop George's misunderstanding of the action of the General Conference of 1824, his conduct seemed to Bishop McKendree so serious an infraction of the established and universal usage of the bishops, and of the constitution itself, that he actually drew up charges against Bishop George with a view to presenting them to the General Conference of 1828.[1] Fortunately the senior bishop stopped short of this extreme step, or the rupture, along a sectional line but on constitutional principles, which had been threatening since 1820, might sooner have been precipitated.

In 1832 the General Conference sought again to give relief in the difficulties of joint, itinerant, general oversight, and passed a resolution that, considering the great extent of the work, the Conference deemed it inexpedient to require each bishop to travel throughout the Church during the recess of the General Conference. To avoid all misunderstanding, the bishops, probably on the suggestion of McKendree and Soule in their private conferences, asked the General Conference for a categorical answer, without debate, to the following question: "Was it the intention of the General Conference, by the resolution above alluded to, simply to relieve the bishops from the influence of the resolution passed at the last General Conference on the same subject, and to leave them now at liberty on their joint and several responsibility to make such arrangements among themselves for the entire administration, and for the visitation of the Annual Conferences as they shall judge most conducive to the general good; and without designing to give any direction or advice whether it be or be not expedient for each of the bishops, in the course of the four years, to visit each of the Annual Conferences, should they themselves find it convenient and practicable, and judge it for the general good so to do?" This carefully framed question, which seems to us to bear the earmarks of Bishop Soule's composition, was answered in the affirmative; and, so far as our inspection of General Conference Journals will warrant so broad a statement,

[1] A copy of these charges in Bishop McKendree's handwriting is in the possession of the writer.

later General Conferences have for the most part, if not entirely, left the bishops to manage questions of this nature among themselves, without direction or advice. Certainly so it was in 1844–45 when the bishops, by consultation and agreement among themselves, conformed their administration to the Plan of Separation and arranged to visit all the Annual Conferences of the dividing Church, "the editorial decisions to the contrary notwithstanding." The question of the bishops in 1832, therefore, with the reply of the General Conference, may be regarded as the completion of the development of the administration of one joint, itinerant, general superintendency by many bishops, whose practical problems Coke and Asbury had first faced in 1784. The principles involved in that question and reply have been accepted as final ever since.

In 1832 Andrew and Emory were added to the episcopacy. In illustration of the remark in the last chapter, a glance at the following table may serve to remind our readers that the General Conference has always conformed to the principle of placing as few men in the episcopal office as could efficiently oversee the whole Church. The composition of the college of bishops from the beginning to date has been as follows:

1784–1800: Coke and Asbury, 2.
1800–1808: Asbury and Whatcoat (to 1806), 2.
1808–1816: Asbury and McKendree, 2.
1816–1824: McKendree, George, and Roberts, 3.
1824–1832: McKendree, George (to 1828), Roberts, Soule, and Hedding, 4 or 5.
1832–1836: McKendree (to 1835), Roberts, Soule, Hedding, Andrew, and Emory (to 1835), 4, 5, or 6.
1836–1844: Roberts (to 1843), Soule, Hedding, Andrew, Waugh, and Morris, 5 or 6.

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1846–1854: Soule, Andrew, Capers (to 1855), and Paine (Bascom, one Conference), 4.
1854–1866: Soule, Andrew, Paine, Pierce, Early, and Kavanaugh, 6.
1866–1870: Soule (to 1867), Andrew (to 1871), Paine, Pierce, Early (to 1873), Kavanaugh, Wightman, Marvin, Doggett, and McTyeire, 9 or 10, but 3 superannuated.
1870–1882: Paine, Pierce, Kavanaugh, Wightman, Marvin (to 1877), Doggett (to 1880), McTyeire, and Keener, 6, 7, or 8: the "old panel."
1882–1886: Pierce (to 1884), Kavanaugh (to 1884), McTyeire,

Keener, Wilson, Parker (to 1885), Granbery, Hargrove, 5, 6, or 8.

1886–1890: McTyeire (to 1889), Keener, Wilson, Granbery, Hargrove, Duncan, Galloway, Hendrix, and Key, 8 or 9.

1890–1894: Keener, Wilson, Granbery, Hargrove, Duncan, Galloway, Hendrix, Key, Haygood, and Fitzgerald, 10.

The following table indicates the number of general superintendents in proportion to the number of members of the Church and of traveling preachers at the close of each General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South:

	Members.	Traveling Preachers.
1846, one bishop to	114,512	379
1850, one bishop to	102,920	340
1854, one bishop to	86,186	289
1858, one bishop to	116,528	429
1866, one bishop to	50,510	248
1870, one bishop to	58,641	291
1874, one bishop to	89,095	435
1878, one bishop to	118,882	552
1882, one bishop to	97,477	449
1886, one bishop to	129,178	555
1890, one bishop to	117,229	486
1894, one bishop to	139,037	578[1]

After this minute historical survey of the development of the general superintendency, with the principles which underlie and support it, we are prepared for a sober estimate of its future. Its sole internal danger was noticed in the last chapter: against peril from that source the very conditions of its life were shown to be, if not a sufficient, at least the most efficient, guard. The episcopate must continue an harmonious unit on all vital and permanent factors of administration, or fall to pieces and perish. Yet even on this point fears have begun to be expressed in our sister Methodism. Dr. W. F. Warren quotes an unnamed bishop as speaking of the increasing difficulty of maintaining uniformity in the episcopal administration. Twenty men, said the bishop, cannot so easily agree and carry out their agreements as five. He then anticipated the time, not far distant, when the Church would need the services of fifty bishops; but with any such number he thought it absolutely impossible to maintain the unity of administration hitherto maintained,

[1] These figures, with the exception of those of 1894, are taken from Dr. P. A. Peterson's "Handbook of Southern Methodism."

and imperatively demanded. The same bishop expressed the decided opinion that if relief were sought in the districting of the bishops the plan would prove fatal, and declared that preachers would not receive the less desirable appointments year after year from the same man. The changing presidency of the Annual Conferences is an essential safeguard of the appointing power and of the itinerancy.[1]

Without attaching undue weight to the opinions of any one man, however wise and experienced, there comes into view at this point what may be styled the *external* danger of our superintendency, which, while it does not threaten the extinction of the office, may involve eventually its modification. There are undoubted and peculiar advantages attending the itinerant general superintendency as it exists in Methodism. Hitherto these advantages have been essential to the unity and extension of the Church. There are also undoubted advantages connected with some modified form of districted or diocesan episcopacy. This appears, in part, from the measure of success our bishops have been able to win from hard conditions in the case of colleges situated near their homes, and in whose management they have continuously shared. The districted or diocesan bishop secures a personal familiarity with all his ministers and their charges, together with every important spiritual, eleemosynary, educational, and material interest of his district—a familiarity which, under present conditions, annually becoming more disadvantageous with the expansion of the Church, is not possible to one of our general superintendents. On the other hand, diocesan episcopacy is entirely foreign to the Methodist system: 1866 has been the only time at which the adoption of something resembling it was even possible in our own Church. The unity of the Church has been conditioned largely on the unity of the episcopacy. As we have shown at length elsewhere, the schism in the college of bishops, which appeared in a very pronounced form certainly as early as 1820, and which was never entirely healed until the two wings of the Church (divided as the bishops were) parted, was, after all, no inconsiderable factor in the division of Episcopal Methodism. Hedding, elected by northern votes, visited the southern wing of the Church but once in twenty years—from 1824 to 1844. Soule, elected by

[1] "Constitutional Law Questions," pp. 127, 128.

southern and western votes, did not appear in his native New England until seven years after he became a bishop. Dr. Warren affirms that "more than from all other sources, the barriers to organic union between the [Methodist Episcopal] Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, spring out of the historic disruption of the original unity of episcopal administration and out of that which has resulted from that disruption."[1]

In any case, certain it is that the increase of the territory, ministry, and membership of the Church, with a corresponding increase of the number of Annual Conferences and of general superintendents, brings with it an attenuation, if not a positive displacement, of the plan and purpose and principles of general superintendency as it was originally projected and as it existed in the earlier history of the Church. The larger the Church and the greater the number of superintendents, the less is the superintendency of any one of these bishops *general* in the sense in which it was originally intended to be. The very success of the superintendency in overseeing and edifying the Church thus creates a limitation upon its maintenance in its primitive purity. It is apparent that the general superintendency, while in form and principle the same, with the extended and extending Church and the largely increased number of superintendents, is in some respects very different from what it was when two, three, or five men could travel throughout the whole Church in a year, or at most two, becoming personally acquainted in that time with the *personnel* of all the Annual Conferences, and with the condition and needs of much of the work. A Church with fifty Annual Conferences and ten superintendents, each of whom holds an average of five Conferences in a year, puts each superintendent at such a disadvantage that it requires ten years for him to fill the presidential chair of all the Annual Conferences. By the time he will ordinarily reach the same Conference a second time (if he ever does) his former knowledge of the body and the work will be of little avail. In the other branch of Episcopal Methodism the conditions are still more adverse, and the limit of development has already been reached. In case of the organic reunion

[1] "Constitutional Law Questions," p. 130. Precisely what Dr. Warren means is not altogether clear; except that 1844 created a division of episcopal as well as General Conference jurisdiction.

of Episcopal Methodism, at the opening of the twentieth century one might count on five millions of members, two hundred Annual Conferences in all parts of the world, and at least forty general superintendents. If we may judge from the representations of Dr. Warren, in the work before cited, and of the bishop whom he there quotes, the Methodist Episcopal Church is even now confronted, not with a theory, but with a condition. This condition is already recognized as demanding solution by essential readjustment of the episcopal office. "The question will come before future General Conferences again and again," says Dr. Warren, "until, in the evolution of our itinerant general superintendency, some marked modification is reached."

We do not mean to give undue credence or importance to all the gossip that floats from lip to lip; but still it is evident, from the matter-of-course announcements that constitute part of the staple news of our weekly exchanges of the Methodist Episcopal Church, that in the case of the larger city and town charges of that Church arrangements for preachers are in many cases made by direct negotiation between official boards and the preachers themselves. It is a very usual item of news in the press of our sister Church that "Rev. Dr. A. B. has been called to C. Church, and has accepted;" or that "Rev. Dr. D. E. has accepted the invitation of his official board to remain with them another year;" or that "Rev. Dr. F. G., notwithstanding the flattering invitation of the board of H. Church to remain, has notified the officers of the church that he will not continue his pastorate, but has accepted the invitation of the board of I. Church," on the other watershed of the continent. These announcements are not here mentioned for criticism, but simply to note that this is not Methodism. Such arrangements may be the necessary outcome of a "condition" to which our own Church is happily as yet a stranger. We know not. Our sister Church has reached the forks of the road and, however unavoidably, has taken the unmethodistic fork. It is a violation of the fundamental compact between preachers and people upon which the itinerancy has always been held to rest; it is, indeed, the destruction of itinerancy, except as the time-limit forces removals; and it is an inevitably fatal invasion of the primitive appointing power. On the other hand, the smaller appointments in the country and villages are, we presume, in

the hands of the presiding elders. Thus the appointing power of the superintendents is reduced to that of mere arbitration between the conflicting claims of rival official boards in one case, and of rival presiding elders in the other. And the arbitrator knows less of the men and Churches than those over whom he is appointed an arbitrator! Such arbitration, however decisive it may be, is a widely different thing from the general superintendency as originally projected in Methodism and as it largely continues to be in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. It is not our affair. Our advice has not been asked. We do not mean to be impertinent, and nobody need give the least attention to our opinion. But we nevertheless entertain and venture to express the humble judgment that Dr. Warren and others are giving themselves needless trouble about the "future" of their episcopacy. A Methodist bishop is not kept on hand as an ornament or a luxury.

Evidently there is a limit to the development of Methodist general superintendency along the lines of its original projection. In our sister Church that limit has been approximated. In the case of the reunion of Episcopal Methodism, the limit would be far overleaped. What would be left of the original principles with twenty-five, thirty, fifty bishops? The general superintendency is not in every particular adapted to a world-wide Church such as Episcopal Methodism is rapidly becoming, for the simple reason that no one man can sustain the relation of a general superintendent to the ecclesiastical affairs of a globe-embracing Church. Methodism bids fair to become the leading Protestant world-force of the twentieth century. Methodism is not yet made: it is yet in the making. There are still in the system undeveloped possibilities. Its flexibility has been its salvation in the past; and its willingness to follow the openings of Divine Providence has been the uniform condition of its largest usefulness to the world. Readjustment, of the kind that has characterized Methodism at every critical stage of its history, is sooner or later inevitable. It would be a pity if either Episcopal Methodism attempted a solution of the new problem independently of the other, especially if different conclusions were reached in the two bodies. Such a difference could only constitute a fresh barrier to the nearer approach of the two Churches. Has not Providence in store for American

Episcopal Methodism something better and more effective than organic reunion could possibly bring? Is not relief to come to the burdened episcopacy as well as to the unwieldy General Conferences through some form of *federation?*

We may glance at a tentative outline of suggestions. (1) Dr. Warren proposes a combination of local bishops, who might be changed quadrennially, with a few general superintendents. He suggests the analogy of local and itinerant preachers and of districted presiding elders, and calls attention to the present plan of missionary bishops and general superintendents in his own Church. This plan, he thinks, of local and general bishops could be very easily extended to the entire Church, and would secure at least a four years' trial of a local bishop before his promotion to the general superintendency. The feasibility of this scheme is doubtful. (2) In the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, we venture to suggest that for the present a better distribution of the Annual Conferences over the entire year would give all necessary relief. A single bishop could preside over eight or ten Annual Conferences, and six or eight effective men could do the whole work. If with this change the limit of charges in a district were removed, and the sphere of District Conference business and of the duties of presiding elders enlarged, the bishops, by a careful schedule of the decreased number of District Conferences, could reach many more of them and accomplish much more in them. These bodies should become preëminently the local preachers' court, in which the passage of their character, their assignment to specific labor, and their election to orders and ordination should take place. Thus would the District Conference acquire a definite and essential sphere, and a paralyzed arm of our ministry be revitalized. (3) Finally, federation may bring to American Episcopal Methodism a division of this continent into a number of coördinate General Conference jurisdictions. When the time came to multiply Annual Conferences they were multiplied—and still multiply. The time has almost come to multiply General Conferences, to relieve the bodies themselves, the episcopacy, and the Church, so extended that uniform legislation is not now always best for every part. Such General Conferences should probably include not more than forty or fifty Annual Conferences and six or eight general superintendents.

THE PRESIDING ELDERSHIP.

(25)

CHAPTER III.

The Presiding Eldership.

By the common consent of Christendom, as well as the authority of our Thirteenth Article of Religion, it is necessary to the existence of a visible Church of Christ that in it "the sacraments" be "duly administered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same." Among the things that of necessity are requisite to the orderly and ordinary administration of the sacraments is an ordained ministry. With the high-church doctrine of the validity of lay-baptism, and the low-church or no-church doctrine which denies a distinction between the ministry and the laity, and the grounds upon which these doctrines rest, we have nothing to do in this connection. Our Methodist article expressly enumerates three essential marks of a Christian Church; to which, if we add the fourth clearly implied mark, we shall have the complete Methodist doctrine of the visible Church of Christ, distinguished by four characteristics as follows: (1) a congregation of faithful men; (2) an ordained ministry; (3) the proclamation of the pure word of God; and (4) the due administration of the sacraments according to Christ's ordinance.

When John Wesley sent to America, by the hand of Thomas Coke, the Article of Religion which contains these doctrines, the Methodist societies in America already possessed the first and the third of these marks. Mr. Wesley designed to convey to them the second and the fourth, and thus to complete in America the organization of a visible Church of Christ. He did this in his character as a providentially appointed scriptural bishop, by bestowing a third ordination upon a presbyter of the Church of England, and by ordaining two of his lay preachers, Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey, first to the

diaconate, and, secondly, to the presbyterate. This company he dispatched to America, empowered and directed to ordain others according to "The Form and Manner of Making and Ordaining of Superintendents, Elders, and Deacons," then in use in the Church of England for constituting the three orders in her ministry. Thus did Mr. Wesley bestow upon the American Methodists a truly protestant episcopacy, equally removed from a papal or prelatical episcopacy on the one hand, and from a so-called presbyterian episcopacy on the other; thus did the venerable Founder of the people called Methodists, in the eighty-second year of his age, and forty years after the meeting of the first Methodist Conference in England, "proceed to form the first Church that ever was organized under a pure republican government," and the first Episcopal Church of any kind that was ever constituted in the United States of America.

Had Methodist orders originated at Fluvanna, instead of at Bristol and Baltimore; in Brokenback Church in 1779, instead of in Lovely Lane Chapel in 1784; descending from Philip Gatch, Reuben Ellis, and James Foster, instead of from John Wesley through Thomas Coke, Richard Whatcoat, and Thomas Vasey, and thence through Francis Asbury, who ordained William McKendree, who ordained Joshua Soule, who ordained Robert Paine, to living men now exercising the episcopal office, this writer, for one, would have had no interest in disputing their validity, as he unhesitatingly recognizes the validity of the orders of every Presbyterian and Congregational Church in the world. Should a New Testament drop down out of the skies on an island never visited by civilized or Christian men, and lead to the conversion of its inhabitants, who should forthwith constitute a ministry and proceed to administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper, a true Church of Christ would be organized as good as the Church of Rome or of England—perhaps better, since it would doubtless escape the corruptions inherited by these Churches from post-apostolic and mediæval times, and approximate more closely to the purity of the New Testament model. Thus, indeed, did Congregational Churches in New England originate. "The governor was moved to set apart the twentieth of July [1629] to be a solemn day of humiliation, for the choyce of a pastor

and a teacher at Salem." After prayer, "the persons thought on," preferring no claim based on their ordination in England, acknowledged a twofold calling: the inward, of God; the outward, from a congregation of believers. The vote was taken, and Skelton was chosen pastor.[1] Such was the origin of the use of the ballot on this continent, and such was the origin of as valid a ministry as exists anywhere in the world. So little is the importance which we attach to the fabulous history or the historical fable of apostolic succession.

But as a matter of history, Methodist orders do not begin with the ordinations of the Fluvanna presbytery, but with those of the scriptural bishop, John Wesley. Historically it can hardly be doubted that he had a better, clearer, louder providential vocation than either the Fluvanna brethren, on the one hand, or the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London, on the other. The actual origin is, to our mind, much more desirable and respectable, because a more evident interposition of the hand of God, than either Canterbury or Fluvanna could have given. As for the ordination of poor brother Seabury, "Samuel, Connecticut," as he was fond of signing himself, the secret nomination of eight or ten Tory rectors was consummated by Scotch non-juring prelates, who, by the stern mandate of civil law, were inhibited from the performance of any such act, which, by the sentence of deprivation pronounced upon its perpetrators on account of their lack of civil qualifications, was in English law *ab initio* null and void. On the very day this farce was performing in Scotland, Bishop Coke was administering the sacraments to hundreds in the forests of America, and the arrangements were perfecting for the calling of the Christmas Conference to organize the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Evolutionists are fond of emphasizing the undoubted fact of embryology, that the development of the embryo, from the moment of the fertilization of the ovum to that of birth, passes, in the case of a higher mammal, as man, through all the stages of the lower orders, so that each of these might be represented as a case of arrested development, giving rise at each stage to a definite lower order of animal life. This embryonic development, the evolutionist insists, is an epitome in individual

[1] Bancroft's History of the United States, Author's Last Revision, I. 228.

life of the wider development of all animal life from a few primordial germs. However this may be (and we are not now concerned in passing judgment on the value of the suggestion), certain it is to our mind that episcopal church government, as it exists in Methodism, is an epitome of the excellences of the congregational and presbyterial systems, with the added unity and vigor and compacted energies peculiar to itself. This highest form of Church life embodies full recognition and use of the lower.

Elsewhere[1] we have given in full the ordination parchment of Thomas Coke, the first Methodist bishop. Here we insert the ordination parchment of Richard Whatcoat, the first Methodist elder:

To all to whom these presents shall come, John Wesley, late Fellow of Lincoln College, in Oxford, presbyter of the Church of England, sendeth greeting:

Whereas many of the people in the southern provinces of North America, who desire to continue under my care, and still adhere to the doctrines and discipline of the Church of England, are greatly distressed for want of ministers, to administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper, according to the usages of the said Church: and whereas there does not appear to be any other way of supplying them with ministers:

Know all men, that I, John Wesley, think myself to be providentially called, at this time, to set apart some persons for the work of the ministry in America. And, therefore, under the protection of Almighty God, and with a single eye to his glory, I have this day set apart for the said work, as an elder, by the imposition of my hands, and prayer (being assisted by two other ordained ministers), Richard Whatcoat, a man whom I judge to be well qualified for that great work. And I do hereby recommend him to all whom it may concern, as a fit person to feed the flock of Christ, and to administer baptism and the Lord's supper, according to the usage of the Church of England. In testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal, this second day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty-four. JOHN WESLEY.

We have inserted this ordination parchment of the first Methodist elder for several reasons: (1) On comparing it with Coke's, we find the two identical, except as one was the credentials of a "superintendent," and the other of an "elder." Hence if Whatcoat's paper is a certificate of orders, no less is Coke's; and we have one more indisputable ground for rejecting the silly conceit that Father Wesley was simply blessing his son Coke when he sent him to America as an evangelist. The identity and dignity of these two parchments demonstrate

[1]Constitutional History, p. 174.

RICHARD WHATCOAT,
The First Methodist Elder.

great method in Wesley's madness. (2) The references to the doctrine, discipline, and usages of the Church of England, contained in Coke's "letters of episcopal orders" (Methodist Discipline, 1789, Section iv.), are supplemented by one more in the parchment of Whatcoat, who is "to administer baptism and the Lord's supper, according to the usage of the Church of England." Coke was qualified to administer the sacraments before his ordination by Wesley and he was therefore authorized "to preside over the flock of Christ." Thus Whatcoat's credentials afford one more evidence that the American Methodist Church was to be an Episcopal Church, modeled closely in doctrine, discipline, and administration of sacraments after the Church of England, and designed to be the successor of the Anglican communion, then defunct in America as to episcopal regimen. (3) It will be noticed that in Coke's credentials Mr. Wesley speaks of "being assisted by other ordained ministers," while in Whatcoat's he specifies the number, "being assisted by *two* other ordained ministers." These two, according to Whatcoat's own explicit testimony, were undoubtedly Coke himself and the Rev. James Creighton. The direct evidence usually cited indicates the presence of five men at these original ordinations—Wesley, Coke, Creighton, Whatcoat, and Vasey. It is an interesting and difficult historical inquiry whether any other presbyter of the Church of England besides Mr. Creighton assisted Wesley at the episcopal ordination of Dr. Coke. In an article in our REVIEW for July, 1861, reviewing the second volume of Smith's History of Wesleyan Methodism, Doctor (afterwards Bishop) Wightman says (p. 327): "In connection with Mr. Creighton, another minister of the establishment, he [the Rev. Peard Dickinson] was present and took part with Wesley in the ordination of Dr. Coke as Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America." Unfortunately Bishop Wightman does not mention any source whence he derived his authority for this statement. Stevens, however, says (History of Methodism, II. 316): "Both these clergymen [Creighton and Dickinson] coöperated heartily in Wesley's plans, and were his assistant presbyters in his ordinations." But this remark occurs in connection with Stevens's account of the Conference at which Mather, Rankin, and Moore were ordained (these men were undoubtedly ordained by Wes-

ley, Creighton, and Dickinson), and it is consequently left somewhat in doubt whether Stevens means to include the first ordinations in 1784, in his two accounts of which he says nothing of Dickinson. The notice of Dickinson in McClintock and Strong's Cyclopædia (II. 786), declares that his ordination in the Church of England took place in 1783: if this ordination was to "priest's orders," he was competent to assist Wesley at Bristol in 1784. The sum of this evidence is not conclusive: several other trails closely followed have yielded no decisive result, and we are at present obliged to leave the inquiry to be further prosecuted. After his graduation at Oxford, Dickinson became curate to Perronet at Shoreham, and so continued until the latter's death. In 1786 he became fully identified with the Methodists, and was appointed to the new City Road Chapel, London. He died in 1802.[1]

The Christmas Conference was called, not as an organ of government in the new Church, but to organize or create that Church (as yet nonexistent), in accordance with the plans of Mr. Wesley communicated through Dr. Coke. Of course as an organizing Conference, determining by majority vote the fate of the measures submitted to it, the Christmas Conference, during the term of its sittings, necessarily exercised the utmost reach of authority, beyond which there is none conceivable; but neither the plan of Mr. Wesley nor any act of the body gave to it vitality after its adjournment; incorporated such a general or permanent governing body in the constitution of the new Church; or projected its legislative or electoral powers one minute beyond the time of its own final dissolution. On the contrary, though the Christmas Conference elected superintendents, elders, and deacons, it confided the future elections of such officers to the Annual Conferences; though the Christmas Conference enacted laws and issued a Discipline, it left the Annual Conferences in possession of the powers which had been used after a fashion for many years before, and which for many years afterwards were exercised by these bodies in the enactment of new laws, in the abrogation or amendment of old ones enacted by the Christmas Conference, in the rejection of nominees for the episcopacy, and in the revision of the Disci-

[1] Smith's History of Wesleyan Methodism, I. 574, 575. Smith spells the name Dickenson; all the other authors quoted, as in the text above.

pline and the issue of many new editions of that supreme law book. The only limitation upon the supreme legislative and electoral authority of the Annual Conferences incorporated by the Christmas Conference in the first Discipline of the Church was the resolution of submission to Mr. Wesley, in which the Americans acknowledged themselves "ready in matters belonging to Church government to obey his commands." No wonder Asbury was "mute and modest" when this resolution passed, for in form it lodged sovereignty in Mr. Wesley, and thus came near defeating in fact his object in calling the Christmas Conference, whose organization of the Church, with this contradictory exception, left the attributes of sovereignty in the Annual Conferences. Mr. Wesley's nominal supremacy or sovereignty continued until 1787, when the record of it was expunged from the law book of the Church, and the Annual Conferences exercised full sovereign power until 1792. The Christmas Conference was without doubt sovereign. It created the Methodist Episcopal Church—leaving it without a General Conference. Later the Church, through its existing sovereign organs, created its General Conference.

This Christmas Conference elected, and Bishops Coke and Asbury, assisted by Presbyters Whatcoat and Vasey, ordained, a number of elders, whose duties and functions we must now proceed to investigate. The office of *presiding* elder is not recognized or defined in the first Discipline of the Church, which simply assigns the duties of an elder "to administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper, and to perform all the other rites prescribed by our Liturgy." In the appointments of 1785, however, the first made after the Christmas Conference, and recorded, indeed, in the same Annual Minutes which officially record the proceedings of that body, the names of John Tunnell, Henry Willis, Richard Ivy, Reuben Ellis, Nelson Reed, Enoch Matson, James O'Kelly, Thomas Foster, Ignatius Pigman, Richard Whatcoat, Caleb Boyer, William Gill, Thomas Vasey, and Thomas Chew, have the title *Elder* affixed to them, and are prefixed to groups of circuits ranging from two to six in number, and including from one preacher, Woolman Hickson, in John Tunnell's care, to nine preachers in Reuben Ellis's. Besides these, Beverly Allen is recognized as an "*Elder*," and assigned to the whole of "Georgia," with

no preachers under him; while John Haggerty, at New York (probably with Ezekiel Cooper, on Long Island, dependent on him for the ordinances), Freeborn Garrettson, at Shelburne, James Cromwell, at Port Roseway, and Jeremiah Lambert and John Baxter, at Antigua, are similarly recognized as "Elders," with no preachers in their charge.[1] These arrangements were in accordance with the design of Mr. Wesley, who, in the beginning, did not intend that all the preachers should be elders, but only that a sufficient number should be ordained to supply the people with the sacraments. In 1786, the second Discipline of the Church adds to the duties of an elder as prescribed in the first: "To exercise within his own district, during the absence of the Superintendents, all the powers invested in them for the government of our Church. Provided that he never act contrary to an express order of the Superintendents."[2] So far as we know, this is the earliest use of the term "district," as applied to an elder's jurisdiction, in the official records of the Church. From that day, it has been in common, not to say universal, use. This agrees exactly with Bishop Soule's manuscript account[3] of the original legal relations subsisting between the bishops and the elders, and which continue without change to this day. The Rev. Thomas Ware, who was a member of the Christmas Conference, deposes that "after our organization, we proceeded to elect a sufficient number of elders to visit the quarterly meetings and administer the ordinances."[4]

Putting together the evidence derivable from the first and second annual Disciplines of the Church, from Thomas Ware and from Joshua Soule, we are authorized to conclude that the presiding eldership, though not at first called by this name, is virtually coeval with the Church itself, and that from the beginning the duties lodged with this officer were (1) the administration of the sacraments; (2) the official visitation of the Quarterly Conferences; and (3) the exercise within an assigned district of all the powers of the general superintendents for the government of the Church during their absence, extending

[1] Minutes, ed. of 1795, pp. 80–83. O'Kelly's name is erroneously entered "Kelly." [2] Discipline of 1786, p. 332. [3] Printed in Constitutional History, pp. 211–213. [4] Meth. Mag. and Quart. Rev., July, 1832, art., "Christmas Conference," by Thos. Ware.

to the ordinary enforcement of law and the prompt administration of discipline.

The first occurrence of the title "presiding elder" in the official action of the Church is in the plan for the Council adopted by the Annual Conferences in 1789, three years after the official term "district" had made its appearance in the Discipline of 1786. The first provision of the plan for the Council was as follows:

> Our bishops and presiding elders shall be the members of this Council; provided, that the members who form the Council be never fewer than nine. And if any unavoidable circumstance prevent the attendance of a presiding elder at the Council, he shall have authority to send another elder out of his own district to represent him; but the elder so sent by the absenting elder shall have no seat in the Council without the approbation of the bishop, or bishops, and presiding elders present. And if, after the above-mentioned provisions are complied with, any unavoidable circumstance or any contingencies reduce the number to less than nine, the bishop shall immediately summon such elders as do not preside, to complete the number."[1]

Here the term "presiding elder," though still absent from the Discipline and the Minutes, occurs no less than three times, showing it to have come into such familiar and common use as to be universally understood without explanation. "District" is also reproduced from the Discipline as the usual official term; and it is evident that even at this early date some elders were not assigned to districts, but were put in charge of circuits under the supervision of other elders, now distinguished as "presiding elders." But in 1787 it was not usual for the presiding elder to have charge of other elders. The development of the office was evidently very rapid. The provisions of the first and second Disciplines, 1785 and 1786, have already been cited. In the Discipline of 1787, which, it will be remembered, was rearranged by Bishop Asbury, appeared for the first time a section "On the Constituting of Elders and their Duty." The duties are defined as follows:

1. To travel through his appointed District.
2. To administer Baptism and the Lord's Supper; and to perform all Parts of Divine Service.
3. In the Absence of a Bishop, to take charge of all the Deacons, traveling and local Preachers, and Exhorters.
4. To change, receive, or suspend Preachers.

[1] Jesse Lee, Short History of the Methodists, p. 149.

5. To direct in the Transaction of all the spiritual Business of his Circuit.
6. To take care that every Part of our Discipline be enforced.
7. To aid in the public Collections.
8. To attend his Bishop when present, and give him when absent, all possible Information by Letter, of the State of his District.

N. B. No Elder that ceases to travel without the consent of the Conference, certified under the Hand of a Bishop, shall on any Account exercise the peculiar Functions of his Office among us.[1]

The Discipline of 1787 was published after the session of the Baltimore Conference, the last of that year, for the resolution of submission to Mr. Wesley, finally rescinded by that body, is omitted. But the revised Discipline as a whole, arranged in thirty-one sections "under proper heads, and methodized in a more acceptable and easy manner" by Bishop Asbury, assisted by John Dickins, was not submitted to the Conferences, for the title "bishop," which occurs for the first time in the Discipline of this year, was not inserted by action of the Conferences, but was approved by them at their sessions in 1788. It is highly probable that Bishop Asbury took the responsibility of expanding the simple provisions of 1786 concerning the elders into the somewhat elaborate section of 1787. But in so doing it is also probable that he simply made formal record in the Discipline of functions and duties that the elders were already actually exercising by appointment of the bishops and consent of the Conferences. The section of 1787 stood substantially unchanged until the meeting of the General Conference in 1792. Bishop Asbury and the Annual Conferences "found that this order of men was so necessary," say Coke and Asbury, in their Notes to the Discipline of 1796, "that they agreed to enlarge the number, and give them *the name* by which they are at present called [the name was doubtless coined by Bishop Asbury; the Conferences acquiesced, though it does not appear in the Discipline until 1792], and which is perfectly scriptural, though not the word used in our translation: and this proceeding afterwards received the approbation of Mr.

[1] Discipline of 1787, Sec. V., p. 8. The capitalization of the original has been retained. In the Constitutional History, p. 215, the date 1789 assigned for the introduction of this section is an error taken from Emory's History of the Discipline, ed. 1844, p. 125. Emory was unable to obtain editions of the Discipline either for 1787 or 1788. This writer is now in possession of original editions of 1786, 1788, 1789, 1790, 1791, and 1792, and has the use of the original editions of 1784–5 (the first), and 1787, the rarest of all.

Wesley [whose supremacy continued formally until 1787]. In 1792 the General Conference, equally conscious of the necessity of having such an office among us, not only confirmed everything that Bishop Asbury and the District [Annual] Conferences had done, but also drew up or agreed to the present section for the explanation of the nature and duties of the office."

The chronology of the name is as follows: (1) It occurs first in the plan of the Council as given by Jesse Lee in 1789; (2) it occurs nowhere in the first edition of the General Minutes, published by John Dickins, in 1795, embracing the official records of all the Annual Conferences from 1773 to 1794, including the Christmas Conference; (3) in the reprint of 1813, the title is used in the appointments of 1789, probably to conform the Minutes to the Plan of the Council—it then disappears from the Minutes until 1797, after which it continues in general use; (4) it first appears in the Discipline in 1792; and (5) it occurs in the first extant journal of a General Conference, namely, that of 1796.

CHAPTER IV.

The Presiding Eldership (Continued).

As we have seen in part, the first attempt to establish a general government in the Methodist Episcopal Church was by means of the creation of a "Council," composed of the bishops and presiding elders, or of other elders substituting the absent chiefs of districts. This Asburyan scheme was adopted by the Annual Conferences as sovereign bodies in 1789. At its second and last session, December 1, 1790—though another session was appointed for December 1, 1792—this Council considered itself invested (1) with full power to act decisively in all temporal matters, and (2) to recommend to the several Conferences any new canons, or alterations to be made in old ones. But these matters will be somewhat more fully considered when, in this series of papers, we reach the question of the genesis and establishment of the General Conference.

At the last session of the Council, James O'Kelly's district was not represented. A member of the first Council, and apparently its ardent supporter, he almost immediately became its most vigorous opponent. In January, 1790, the month after the adjournment of the first session of the Council, O'Kelly took it upon himself to address to Asbury a letter of remonstrance and complaint, almost inhibitory in its demands, and not devoid of clearly implied threats. Asbury says he spoke with the authority of a pope. Accordingly, in November following, when preparations were making throughout the Church for the second session of the Council, O'Kelly called a meeting of the preachers of his district, at which twenty-two, including William McKendree, were present. At this conference it was speedily agreed "to send no member to Council," thus illustrating Bishop Asbury's assertion of the superior and controlling influence of the presiding elders over the preachers of their districts. During 1790 O'Kelly also entered into a cor-

respondence with Dr. Coke, in London, and succeeded in committing him against the Council and in favor of the General Conference, so that when the two bishops met in February, 1791, there was a little "heat," which disappeared when Asbury promptly "acceded to a General Conference for the sake of peace."[1] Asbury says in a letter to Morrell that O'Kelly also wrote to Mr. Wesley, and Dr. Coke declares that he "prevailed on James O'Kelly and the thirty-six traveling preachers who had withdrawn with him from all connections with Bishop Asbury to submit to the decision of a General Conference," and that when the Conference met in 1792, "he [Coke] proposed and obtained that great blessing to the American Connection—a permanency for General Conferences, which were to be held at stated times."[2] Thus this restless agitator, addressing himself to both of the bishops and to Mr. Wesley, then in the last year of his earthly pilgrimage, and organizing the preachers of his district in independence of Mr. Asbury and of the Connection, ably seconded also, as to the end sought, by Jesse Lee, who from the beginning had been a sturdy and outspoken opponent of the Council, so fomented the general dissatisfaction that the third session, though appointed, was never held, the General Conference anticipating and superseding it. "Bishop Asbury proposed the Council," says Bangs, "which had but an ephemeral existence, and did not answer the design of its institution, to which neither Dr. Coke nor O'Kelly was agreed, the former submitting to it from deference to Bishop Asbury, proposing in the meantime a General Conference as a substitute."[3]

O'Kelly's great contention of an appeal from the bishop to the Conference on the question of the appointment of the preachers was fully debated and decisively rejected at the first session of the General Conference. Back of this lay his personal grievance with regard to his permanent occupancy of the South Virginia District. Asbury declares that he stipulated with him through Dr. Coke to allow him to remain there until the decision of the proposed General Conference could be had. An inspection of the appointments from 1784 to 1792 will reveal the fact that men like Whatcoat, Willis, Ivy, Ellis, Reed, and O'Kelly had almost continuously presided over districts

[1] Asbury's Journal, II. 95. [2] Letter to the General Conference of 1808, Bangs's History of the M. E. Church, II. 207. [3] *Ibid.*, II. 224.

since the Christmas Conference, and, for the most part, over the same districts, or in the same general region. "Mr. O'Kelly," says Asbury, "being disappointed in not getting an appeal from any station made by me, withdrew from the Connection and went off. For himself, the Conference well knew he could not complain of the regulation; he had been located to the south district of Virginia for about ten succeeding years; and upon his plan, might have located himself and any preacher, or set of preachers, to the district, whether the people wished to have them or not."[1] As it had been only eight years since the Christmas Conference and the first ordination of elders, when O'Kelly was ordained, this can only mean that O'Kelly had done circuit work in that region for two years before the Christmas Conference. This is confirmed by the minutes (1795), which show that O'Kelly was stationed in Brunswick in 1783 and in Sussex in 1784.

The question, therefore, of the appointment and term of the presiding elders came prominently before this first General Conference. Of this body we have no journal, the alterations, as Lee tells us, being entered at their proper place and published in the next edition of the Form of Discipline.[2] But this Discipline of 1792 and Lee's History lie before us, and afford all necessary information. Of the presiding eldership Lee says:

> The fifth section had respect to the presiding elders. Such an order of elders had never been regularly established before. They had been appointed by the bishop for several years; but it was a doubt in the mind of the preachers whether such power belonged to him. The General Conference now determined that there should be presiding elders, and that they should be chosen, stationed, and changed by the bishop.[3]

When we consider the section "On the Constituting of Elders and their Duty" in the Discipline of 1787, cited in our last chapter, which had stood without change in those of 1788, 1789, 1790, and 1791, it is evident that this language of Lee's cannot mean that there was any doubt as to the legality of existing

[1] Journal, II. 147. [2] It is probable that this was also the case at the Christmas Conference, the supposed long-lost minutes of this body never having had any existence as a distinct record. I am well aware of the danger of the many universal negative judgments which I have been compelled to express on various points, and stand ready to reverse any of them on proper evidence. [3] Short History of the Methodists, p. 183.

districts and the authority of the bishop to appoint elders to preside over them. But the dignity and solemnity of the ordination of the elders to an order which, unlike the diaconate, was of life tenure; the examples of permanency in the presidency of certain districts, which, as in O'Kelly's case, had continued in some instances since the original ordinations at the Christmas Conference; the exclusive governing functions to which the elders had been assigned in the constitution of the Council; the comparative fewness of their numbers, and the commanding influence which their age, experience, talents, and permanency speedily enabled many of them to acquire in their districts and throughout the Church, had begotten a doubt whether the presiding eldership was not a lifetime estate, like the episcopate, and whether the bishops had authority to "choose, station, and change" the solemnly ordained occupants of this sub-episcopal office.

There are many indications that the organization of the General Conference in 1792 was seized upon as a favorable time for a fresh sifting and settling of the general economy of the Church. Says Asbury: "The General Conference went through the Discipline, Articles of Faith, Forms of Baptism, Matrimony, and the Burial of the Dead; as also the Offices of Ordination. The Conference ended in peace after voting another General Conference four years hence."[1] In the address prefixed to the Discipline of 1792, dated Baltimore, November 16, and signed by Coke and Asbury, the bishops say: "We think ourselves obliged frequently to view and review the whole order of our Church, always aiming at perfection, standing on the shoulders of those who have lived before us, and taking the advantage of our former selves."[2] Since the Christmas Conference, the "Form of Discipline," remarks Lee, "had been changed and altered in so many particulars, and the business of the Council had thrown the Connection into such confusion, that we thought proper at this Conference to take under consideration the greater part of the Form of Discipline, and either abolish, establish, or change the rules." Accordingly, in 1792 the presiding eldership is formally recognized in the Discipline; this officer is placed, like other preachers, at the disposal of the bishop as to his appointment, and his term on

[1] Journal, II. 147. [2] Discipline of 1792, p. iv.

a given district is limited to four years. The General Conference confirmed all that Bishop Asbury and the Annual Conferences had done, and drew up a section in which the bishop in two separate questions and answers is expressly empowered, first to choose, and then to station and change the presiding elders. Lee and the Discipline of 1792 are identical in their phraseology about "choosing, stationing, and changing." This section stood unaltered from 1792 until 1804, as follows:

Quest. 1. By whom are the presiding elders to be chosen?

Answ. By the bishop.

Quest. 2. What are the duties of the presiding elder?

Answ. 1. To travel through his appointed district.

2. In the absence of a bishop to take charge of all the elders, deacons, traveling and local preachers, and exhorters in his district.

3. To change, receive, or suspend preachers in his district during the intervals of the Conferences and in the absence of the bishop.

4. In the absence of a bishop, to preside in the Conference of his district.

5. To be present, as far as practicable, at all the quarterly meetings; and to call together at each quarterly meeting all the traveling and local preachers, exhorters, stewards, and leaders of the circuit, to hear complaints, and to receive appeals.

6. To oversee the spiritual and temporal business of the societies in his district.

7. To take care that every part of our Discipline be enforced in his district.

8. To attend the bishop when present in his district; and to give him when absent all necessary information, by letter, of the state of his district.

Quest. 3. By whom are the presiding elders to be stationed and changed?

Answ. By the bishop.

Quest. 4. How long may the bishop allow an elder to preside in the same district?

Answ. For any term not exceeding four years successively.

In 1804 to the third item of the presiding elder's duties were added the words, "as the Discipline directs;" sundry other changes were also made at the same time, which do not affect the essential principles and rules of the administration intrusted to this officer, or his relations to the bishops and to the Annual Conferences, all of which have remained as settled in 1792. In 1840 the presiding elder was given the power to "decide all questions of law in a Quarterly Meeting Conference, subject to an appeal to the president of the next Annual Conference; but in all cases the application of law shall be with the Conference."

The controversies which agitated the Church throughout the opening quarter of this century concerning the election of presiding elders by the Annual Conferences and their official functions and responsibility in the appointment of the preachers cannot be entered upon here. Suffice it to say that none of these agitations resulted in any modification of the underlying principles finally settled in 1792, and guaranteed by the constitution of 1808 as an integral part of our plan of itinerant general superintendency. The formative period of the presiding eldership was from 1784 to 1792, since which time, notwithstanding the persistent efforts of some of the ablest leaders the Church has had, especially in the Northern Conferences, its material features have remained unchanged. It is difficult for us to realize that on this question the Northern opponents of McKendree and Soule, authors and defenders of the constitution, came near disrupting the Church in 1820–24, and by their attitude kept Soule out of the episcopacy for a quadrennium. This story we have elsewhere told at length. The Annual Conferences have never had a voice in the selection of presiding elders. Nobody but the bishop has ever been responsible for the appointments of the preachers. The "cabinet," and the functions of the presiding elder in the cabinet, are still without definition or recognition in the Discipline. Bishop Asbury always made the appointments without the aid of a cabinet. Bishop McKendree is the father of the institution: since his day it has rested securely on the basis of common consent and general usage. The regulations of 1792 have worked well for more than a hundred years. They are protected in essentials by the constitution. The office has been under discussion from its creation to this day. That it is capable of improvement in various details —by enlargement of the districts and a more accurate alignment of District Conferences with the bodies above and below them, as some of us think—is no doubt true; that the Church will modify it in any essential feature is not likely in our day.

THE ITINERANCY.

(45)

CHAPTER V.

THE ITINERANCY.

THE first public expounders in America of the gospel according to Methodism—Robert Strawbridge, Philip Embury, and Thomas Webb—were all local preachers, a fact not without its bearing on present-day discussions. The itinerancy came to these western shores in the persons of Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmoor in 1769; of Francis Asbury and Richard Wright in 1771; and of Thomas Rankin and George Shadford in 1773, when the first Conference, composed of ten members, met in the city of Philadelphia.

Between 1744, the date of the first British, and 1773, the date of the first American, Conference, the itinerancy had been developed and fixed as to many essential features in England. Unlike the episcopacy and the presiding eldership, the itinerancy is not peculiar to American Methodism. Many important changes, moreover, were made by the British Conference after the last-mentioned date. For a comprehensive historical exposition of the advantageous practical features and the broad legal principles exemplified in Methodist itinerancy, it will be necessary, therefore, in two distinct though closely related papers, to investigate,

I. The Rise and Growth of Itinerancy in England, and

II. The Modifications of Itinerancy in America.

At that first London Conference of 1744 the question was asked, "What may we reasonably believe to have been God's design in raising up the *preachers* called Methodists?" and the Minutes record the answer, "To reform the nation—more particularly the Church; to spread scriptural holiness over the land"; or, according to the Large Minutes, "As messengers sent by the Lord, out of the common way, to provoke the regular clergy to jealousy, and to supply their lack of service toward those

who are perishing for want of knowledge; and, above all, to reform the nation by spreading scriptural holiness over the land."

The Conference of 1820 reaffirmed and expanded this original conception of the office and duty of Methodist preachers:

> Let us ourselves remember, and endeavor to impress on our people, that we, as a body, do not exist for the purposes of party; and that we are specially bound by the example of our founder, by the original principle on which our societies are formed, and by our constant professions before the world, to avoid a narrow, bigoted, and sectarian spirit, to abstain from needless and unprofitable disputes on minor subjects of theological controversy—and, so far as we innocently can, "to please all men for their good unto edification." Let us, therefore, maintain toward all denominations of Christians who "hold the Head," the kind and catholic spirit of primitive Methodism; and, according to the noble maxim of our fathers in the gospel, "be the friends of all, the enemies of none." *

It is in full accord with these catholic principles that we find in the first Discipline of American Methodism, as enacted by the Christmas Conference, this question and answer:

> Q. 47. Shall persons who continue to attend divine service and partake of the Lord's Supper with other Churches have liberty at the same time to be members of our Society?
>
> A. They shall have *full* liberty, if they comply with our Rules.†

The word *full* is italicized in the original. When we consider all the conditions prior to 1784, as they obtained in Mr. Jarratt's parish and elsewhere, it is probable that a considerable proportion of the first Methodists were sheltered and protected by Question 47: it is at least doubtful—though the inquiry would be more curious than profitable—whether members of other communions are not to-day entitled to recognition among the Methodists should they seek it.

In the beginning the usual method of conferring the ministerial character was for the assistant to recommend to Mr. Wesley such young men as seemed suited to the work of the itinerancy, with or without consultation with the quarterly meeting, and sometimes without the knowledge of the person concerned. Mr. Wesley then made an appointment, of which the young appointee might know nothing until the Conference was over. Bishop Asbury sometimes did the same thing in America. In the superintendent of the circuit alone, who corresponds to the old assistant, there is now vested the constitutional right, among

[1] English Minutes, 1820, Vol. V., pp. 148, 149. [2] Discipline, 1785, pp. 17, 18 (original).

our English brethren, of nominating candidates for the itinerancy to the quarterly meetings of the circuits; so that if he declines to nominate a local preacher, no other person can assume this function. The superintendent, however, is required to counsel with his junior colleagues in the circuit, to examine the candidate privately on Methodist doctrine and discipline, to hear him preach, and, as far as possible, to afford the members of the quarterly meeting an opportunity to do so. The power of the quarterly meeting is limited to a judgment on these three points: Has he grace? has he gifts? has God given him fruit of his labors? If a majority decide against the candidate, the case is dismissed for that year; if a majority decide for him, the jurisdiction of the quarterly meeting terminates. Its vote of approval is taken by the superintendent, or preacher in charge, to the ensuing annual district meeting; and all cases approved by the district committees are reported to the Conference, which makes final disposition of them.

Section 1 of Chapter III. of our present Discipline (1894), "Of the Trial of Those who Think They are Moved by the Holy Ghost to Preach," dates back, substantially unchanged, to the Third English Conference, held in 1746; so that for one hundred and fifty years these have been the tests among all Methodists of entrance upon the duties of the Christian ministry.

The feature of examination before the district meeting was introduced in 1802. Through the exertions of the Rev. Joseph Entwhistle, a plan prepared and proposed by him was recommended by the York and Manchester district meetings to the Conference of that year, which adopted the following law:

> At present the candidate is supposed to have passed the quarterly meeting, from which he is recommended to the district meeting. In addition to this, let him, if possible, attend the district meeting, and be examined before all the brethren present respecting his experience, his knowledge of divine things, his reading, his view of the doctrines of the gospel, and his regard for Methodism in general. The preacher who examines him shall be chosen by the ballot of the district committee. After the examination, the candidate shall withdraw, and the committee shall deliberate on the propriety or impropriety of his admission on trial, and determine whether he shall be recommended to the ensuing Conference or not. If it be not convenient for the candidate to attend the district meeting, three of the committee shall be chosen by ballot, and appointed to act in this instance for the district.[1]

[1] English Minutes, 1802, Vol. II., p. 140.

Thus, when the General Conference of 1894 transferred from Quarterly to District Conferences the duty of recommending candidates for admission on trial to the Annual Conferences, it but followed substantially an English precedent which dates back to 1802; though we do not remember that either the committee having the measure in charge or any debater on the floor of the Conference urged this fact in favor of the proposed law, or in any way called attention to it. The provision of a committee of examination for such candidates, to be appointed by the presiding elder, obviously agrees in principle also with the English usage.

William Pierce, in his "Ecclesiastical Principles and Polity of the Wesleyan Methodists" (third edition, revised by Frederick J. Jobson, D.D.), gives the following as the substance of the usual examination conducted by the chairman of a district for candidates for admission on trial into the Conference. It is of sufficient importance to be transcribed entire:

Do you believe that the Scriptures reveal a Trinity in unity in the eternal Godhead?

How do you define this fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith?

By what line of argument do you prove that this mysterious truth is taught in the Scriptures?

Do you believe that there exists a relation between the persons in the Trinity? and what is that relation?

How do you further prove the essential divinity of the Son of God?

How do you prove the eternal Sonship of the Second Person in the Trinity?

How do you prove the distinct personality and proper deity of the Holy Ghost?

What do you understand by original sin? Are the whole posterity of Adam, in consequence of his sin, involved in guilt and subjects of inherent depravity?

How do you prove this to be the doctrine of the Scriptures?

In what light do you regard the death of Jesus Christ?

How do you define the nature of that atonement or propitiation which Jesus Christ made?

For whom did he offer the propitiatory sacrifice?

How do you prove from the Scriptures that our Lord has made atonement for the sins of the whole world?

In what does repentance for sin consist?

What do you understand by the present justification of a sinner before God?

Are not pardon, justification, and adoption substantially the same act of God, viewed under the different relations which he bears to man as a Sovereign, a Judge, and a Father?

By what Scriptures do you sustain this view?

What is the nature of justifying faith?

What are the immediate results of justification?

What is the direct witness of the Spirit?

Is this the privilege of all Christian believers?

What is the new birth, or regeneration?

Although, as we believe, justification, the witness of the Spirit, and regeneration are coexistent—that is, they are bestowed upon us in the same moment of time—is there not, in the order of thinking, a succession of one to the other? and between the two latter is there not a relation resembling that of cause and effect?

In what respects does regeneration differ from justification?

How does it differ from sanctification?

What is entire sanctification?

Do you believe that this state of "perfect love" is attainable in the present life by all believers?

How do you prove it to be so attainable?

Do you believe that the perseverance of the saints is conditional?

How do you prove that the saints may finally fall from a state of grace?

What do you believe concerning the resurrection of the dead?

Will the same body, in the popular sense of that term, be raised again?

Do you believe that the happiness of the righteous and punishment of the wicked, in a future state, will be strictly and literally eternal?

Have you read the Large Minutes?

Do you approve of the Methodist discipline?

Will you observe it yourself and enforce it upon others?

Do you believe the Christian Sabbath to be a divine institution of perpetual and universal obligation in the Christian Church?

What are the sacraments which our Lord has ordained in his Church?

Are you under any matrimonial engagement?

Do you take no snuff, tobacco, or drams?

Are you free from debt?

If approved, are you willing to be employed under the direction of the Conference in any part of the world, or do you restrict your offer? [1]

Candidates accepted by the Conference are not in all cases immediately assigned work. Any excess above the number demanded for the circuits may be sent to the theological institution, or placed upon the president's list of reserves. The Conference of 1785 fixed the term for which preachers should remain on trial at four years. As to the studies of these clerical probationers, several wholesome regulations may be noted: As early as 1798 it was made the duty of the superintendent of the

[1] Pp. 263, 264. Mr. Pierce's work is a code or digest prepared from the entire series of English Minutes under classified titles. Indebtedness is acknowledged to this work, but all its references have been verified.

circuit to see "that the preachers on trial have the eight volumes of [Wesley's] sermons to read." It was further enacted that every probationer, "when received into full connection, shall have the eight volumes given to him as a present from the book room." In 1815 probationers are required to procure all of Mr. Wesley's works while on trial, but are allowed to pay for them in convenient installments. In 1825 the Conference recommends the "quarterly meetings of these circuits, in which such preachers are stationed while on trial, to allow them a sum not less than one guinea per quarter in addition to their usual salary, to be laid out in the purchase of books." In 1867 the Conference directed that at each district meeting, annually for the four years of probation, "three English books shall be fixed upon as the subjects of such examination, . . . with a subject in Greek or Hebrew, in addition, for such as read those languages."

The Deed of Declaration empowers the Conference to admit into full connection persons approved as expounders of God's word. As early as 1793 it was ordered that "every preacher, before he is admitted into full connection, shall draw out a sketch of his life and experience." The Conference of 1813 enacted that, after the usual reception into full connection by the president of the Conference, the ex-president should deliver to the class an appropriate charge. A fear having been expressed that some of the younger preachers were in danger of departing from the leading doctrines of Methodism, it was required in 1805 that, "before any preacher be admitted into full connection, he shall be required to give a full and explicit declaration of his faith as to these doctrines;" and in 1814 these doctrines were enumerated and defined as follows:

> The following are chiefly the doctrines to which his unequivocal assent is demanded: A trinity of persons in the unity of the Godhead; the total depravity of all men by nature, in consequence of Adam's fall; the atonement made by Christ for the sins of all the human race; justification by faith; the absolute necessity of holiness, both in heart and life; the direct witness of the Spirit; and the proper eternity of future rewards and punishments.[1]

It is well known that in 1784 Mr. Wesley ordained Dr. Coke, Mr. Whatcoat, and Mr. Vasey, and subsequently performed many other ordinations for Scotland and England. Neverthe-

[1] English Minutes, 1814, Vol. IV., p. 41.

less, more than half a century elapsed before ordination by the imposition of hands was adopted by the English Conference. Not until the year 1836 does this action appear:

The Conference, after mature deliberation, resolves that the preachers who are this year to be publicly admitted into full connection shall be ordained by imposition of hands; that this shall be our standing rule and usage in future years, and that any rule of a contrary nature which may be in existence shall be, and is hereby, rescinded.[1]

Since 1792 the rule had stood: "No ordination shall take place in the Methodist connection without the consent of the Conference first obtained." To it was annexed this severe penalty: "If any brother shall break the above-mentioned rule by ordaining or being ordained without the consent of the Conference being obtained, the brother so breaking the rule does thereby exclude himself." In the Large Minutes appear these additions to the rule: "Nor shall gowns or bands be used among us, or the title of reverend be used at all." In 1822 a long and animated Conference debate on the subject resulted in nothing. It was largely through the influence of Jabez Bunting, as Dr. Mudge points out in his article in the March issue of THE METHODIST REVIEW, 1896, that decisive action was taken in 1836 as indicated above. In 1841 it was further resolved "that the persons by whom the Conference shall confer ordination to our ministry, by imposition of hands, be the president, ex-president, and secretary of the Conference for the time being, with two of the senior preachers to be nominated by the president." It has been usual, however, to invite visiting bishops of the American Church to assist in these ordinations. Bishop Soule so assisted in 1842, placing his hands upon the head of the now venerable and venerated William Arthur, as did Bishop Galloway at his recent visit as fraternal messenger from our Church. The ordination service used conforms closely to Mr. Wesley's original abridgment from the Church of England's service, and is entitled, "The Form and Manner of Ordaining of Elders." It does not differ materially from our own, nor do the questions asked at the time of reception into full connection vary in any important particular from our own; but the president calls upon as many of the class as the time will allow to relate briefly the circumstances of their conversion, their present religious expe-

[1] English Minutes, 1836, Vol. VIII., p. 85.

rience, their conviction of a divine call to the work of the ministry, and their purpose of full devotion to God and his work. Thus, in their theological examinations, both in private and in public, and in their written and oral narratives of experience, the ministers of Methodism in England are thrown back upon their living, personal knowledge of the things of God as the first qualification for their life work.

The Deed of Declaration invests the Conference with an unqualified right to expel from the connection any preacher for any cause which, in the judgment of the Conference, may justify such a penalty. Nevertheless, regulations have been adopted from time to time which furnish a safe check upon arbitrary expulsions. In 1791 it was ordered that a district meeting shall investigate all critical cases; in 1793 that a copy of the charges should be sent the accused—the tribunal known as a minor district meeting was also constituted, and its function to suspend a preacher until Conference defined; and in 1795 the somewhat elaborate provisions of the "Plan of Pacification" went into effect. The general principles involved have been reasserted by the Conference from time to time, and many details of administration have been added as emergencies demanded them.

The Deed of Declaration also enacts that "the Conference shall not, nor may, appoint any person for more than three years successively to any chapel," the clergymen of the Church of England affiliating with the Methodists being exempted from the operation of this rule. But in 1791, immediately after Mr. Wesley's death, when the Deed became the supreme civil charter of the connection, the Conference ordained that "no preacher shall be stationed for any circuit above two years successively, unless God has been pleased to use him as the instrument of a remarkable revival." [1] In 1804 it was reaffirmed that "no preacher shall be permitted to remain more than two years successively." But in 1818 it was agreed:

> Whenever it is proposed to station any preacher in the same circuit for a third year in succession, the reasons assigned for such triennial station shall be specially stated to the Conference before the appointment is confirmed.[2]

In 1801 it was ordered that no preacher should be returned to a circuit where he had served for even a single year until after an interval of seven years. In 1807 the period of neces-

[1] English Minutes, 1791, Vol. I., p. 254. [2] *Ibid.*, 1818, Vol. IV., p. 455.

sary absence was increased to eight years; but in 1866 the period for Scotland was reduced to three years.

In 1830 the Conference ordained that where there were two or more circuits in the same city, no preacher should be stationed so as to remain for above six years in succession in such place. But in 1872 the May district committees were given jurisdiction in the premises during the presence of the lay members.

The provisions of the British Conference concerning supernumerary and superannuated preachers are not unworthy of attention. In 1793 the Conference resolved that "every preacher shall be considered as a supernumerary for four years after he has desisted from traveling, and shall afterwards be deemed superannuated." In 1800 this safeguard was erected: "Let no preacher be declared superannuated, or stationed as a supernumerary, without the recommendation of the district meeting to which he belongs." And in 1806 this statute was enacted:

> The mode of supplying the wants of our supernumerary [and superannuated?] preachers shall be left to the discretion of the Committee of Eleven, annually appointed, who shall determine the measure of relief that ought to be afforded to the respective claimants, in addition to their annuity from the legal fund; and shall also decide, according to circumstances, from what source the additional allowance should be derived.

As early as 1787 the subject of permitting strangers to preach in the chapels engaged the attention of the Conference, and the following minute was adopted: "Let no person that is not in connection with us preach in any of our chapels or preaching houses without a note from Mr. Wesley, or from the assistant of the circuit from whence he comes; which note must be renewed yearly." This action of 1807 will be of special interest to Americans:

> We, therefore, again direct that no stranger from America or elsewhere, be suffered to preach in any of our places, unless he come fully accredited, if an itinerant preacher, by having his name entered on the minutes of the Conference of which he is a member; and if a local preacher, by a recommendatory note from his superintendent.[1]

The following very judicious and carefully elaborated resolution of 1847, reaffirmed in 1862, is so pertinent to present-day conditions among us, and so fertile of wise suggestion, that we make no apology for transcribing it here:

> That while this Conference have always been, and are, sincerely and cor-

[1] English Minutes, 1807, Vol. II., p. 405.

dially thankful for those genuine and scriptural revivals of religion with which God has been graciously pleased so often to visit many of our circuits, and by which he has from time to time refreshed and extended his heritage among us, they feel themselves bound in conscience and in fidelity to the sacred trust specially committed to them, as the recognized ministers and pastors of the connection, to declare in the strongest terms their disapprobation of the occasion which certain persons have taken from some recent movements, designed for the promotion of religious revivals, to encourage a spirit of unholy dissension, strife, and disorder. The Conference fully believe that, in very many instances, this has occurred without any evil intention, and inadvertently, or without due consideration; but it is their deliberate judgment that the tendency and operation of the proceedings, to which reference is here made, have been to produce serious discords of opinion, feeling, and conduct among brethren, and to create that *internal disunion* which is truly and scripturally condemned as *divisive* and *schismatical*. In connection with this great evil, the Conference regret to perceive, not indeed generally, but yet in too many instances, a disposition to adopt (perhaps unawares) views and sentiments which, on the alleged ground of concern for special and extraordinary revivals, have the effect of alienating, in some degree, the affections of our people from the well-accredited, long-tried, and officially responsible ministers and pastors of our churches; of lessening them in public estimation; of diminishing their legitimate and beneficial influence; of substituting something new and irregular for the ordinary ministry and standing institutions of the gospel; and of leading some individuals, most injuriously to themselves, to undervalue the authority and eventual efficiency, under the promised blessing of the Holy Spirit, of the stated preaching of the word, and of other appointed means of grace.

Then follow a republication and reënactment of the minute of 1807 cited above, with a resolution approving the administration of the ex-president in these delicate matters.[1]

Thus have we passed in review the essential regulations of the British Conference concerning the itinerancy which for a century and a half has certified its usefulness among Methodists as their chief evangelizing agency. There is little or nothing in this long history that suggests the necessity or expediency of the abolition of the "time limit," or the modification of any of the essential principles of Methodist itinerancy. Such a change would be in the strictest sense an experiment, to our mind rash and hazardous, contrary to the universal experience of Methodism, and unwarranted by any special conditions of our times. But to these points we shall return in our next chapter on the modification of itinerancy among the American Methodists.

[1] English Minutes, 1847, Vol. X., pp. 551–553.

FRANCIS ASBURY,
Apostle of American Methodism.

CHAPTER VI.

The Itinerancy (Continued).

In our study of American itinerancy, it will be expedient first of all rapidly to sketch the development of the system from the arrival of the earliest itinerant preachers to the assembling of the Christmas Conference. Though disturbed outwardly by the War of the Revolution, which falls wholly within this period, and which occasioned the return home of all the English itinerants except Asbury; and though inwardly convulsed by nearly fatal schism within the Conference itself, this period of our Church life and administration is not nearly so chaotic as might at first be supposed, and will be found richly to repay a more patient and minute study than has often been bestowed upon it.

When Francis Asbury landed at Philadelphia, in the last week of October, 1771, he was fully convinced, theoretically and practically, that the Methodist doctrine and discipline were the purest and most efficient then taught and enforced anywhere in the world. He confidently anticipated that this world-wide Arminian plan of salvation, and this world-wide scheme of itinerant evangelization, would be greatly honored of God in the wilds of America. In 1784 Coke said, "He will carry his gospel by thee [Asbury] from sea to sea, and from one end of the continent to another;" and some such prophetic assurance seems to have been granted to the soul of Asbury himself, if we may judge from several entries in his Journal, at the beginning of his apostolic labors. He was "fixed to the Methodist plan," and when, less than a month after his arrival on the continent, he found his itinerant predecessor and chief of administration, Boardman, lax in the use and enforcement of itinerancy, he determined "to stand against all opposition as an iron pillar strong, and steadfast as a wall of brass." He

sought (1) a circulation of the preachers to avoid partiality and popularity, and (2) to hinder the confinement of the labors of the itinerants to the cities, chiefly New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. These convictions abode with him and guided his administration for forty-five years, 1771–1816. He never yielded to popular demands for the relaxation of Methodist law and usage; nor accepted the estimates of lazy or unconsecrated preachers as to what was feasible or desirable. In his "Valedictory Address to William McKendree, Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church," written in August, 1813, he said: "Guard particularly against two orders of preachers—the one for the country, the other for the cities. . . . You know, my brother, that the present ministerial cant is that we cannot now, as in former apostolical days, have such doctrines, such discipline, such convictions, such conversions, such witnesses of sanctification, and such holy men. But I say that we can; I say we must; yea, I say we have." The stuff was in the man, and we need not wonder that one year after his arrival in America, in October, 1772, Asbury, by Mr. Wesley's appointment, succeeded Boardman as the American assistant and head of the itinerant forces. Thomas Rankin, who in the summer of 1773 relieved Asbury as assistant, was a man of like loyalty to Methodist doctrine and discipline, and of like persistence if not like ability. "To these two thorough disciplinarians," well remarks Abel Stevens, "we owe the effective organization of the incipient Methodism of the new world. Without them it seems probable that it would have adopted a settled pastorate, and become blended with the Anglican Church of the colonies, or, like the fruits of Whitefield's labors, have been absorbed in the general Protestantism of the country."

Until 1773 and the arrival of Rankin, the oversight and regulation of the work and the appointment of the preachers were attended to in Quarterly Conferences. The primitive American Methodist organism was unicellular, so to speak, and the quarterly meetings were the seats of initial governmental life in the Church. So great an advance was made in 1773 that Asbury says of the Conference of that year: "Our general conference began: in which the following propositions were agreed to," etc.[1] The first Quarterly Conference in America of which

[1] Journal, I. 55.

any record remains was held during Asbury's administration, and under his presidency, on the western shore of Maryland, December 23, 1772. He preached from Acts xx. 28, recording in his Journal an outline of the very practical sermon, and stationed Strawbridge and Owen in Frederick; King, Webster, and Rollins on the other side of the bay; and himself in Baltimore. Thus the quarterly meeting was a very effective center for the distribution of itinerant laborers, who might be nominally local preachers: if a little more of the primitive energy could be infused into both the modern bodies and the modern preachers of this class, it might be well for modern Methodism. The better use of the machinery we have might prove wiser than the manufacture of new. At Presbury's, Strawbridge, a married man, received £8 quarterage, and Asbury and King, bachelors, £6 each. At this Conference Asbury also resisted the pleadings of the sanguine and large-hearted Strawbridge, and refused to depart from the Methodist plan by granting permission to the preachers to administer the sacraments.

Asbury enjoyed less than a year of this primitive but effective administration, when he was superseded by the appointment and arrival of Thomas Rankin with Mr. Wesley's commission as "general assistant" for America. In the middle of July, 1773, about six weeks after his landing, Rankin assembled for the first time the preachers of all the American circuits in the city of Philadelphia, in what Asbury, as we have seen, calls a "general conference," though this institution did not come into existence or acquire legal definition and fixation in the Discipline or in the Church until nearly twenty years afterwards, in 1792. The body, though exercising limited legislative functions and supervising the whole work, more nearly resembled what is now known as an Annual Conference; and as such assemblies continued to be held once a year, it is usual to designate them, though with considerable inexactness, Annual Conferences. As to itinerancy, Mr. Rankin exercised without challenge the appointing power in this Conference, as Boardman and Asbury had previously done in the quarterly meetings; "the preachers were stationed in the best manner we could," he says. Asbury and Strawbridge, with two colleagues, were sent to Baltimore; Wright to Nor-

folk; Williams to Petersburg; King and Watters to New Jersey; Shadford to Philadelphia; and Rankin to New York, with the express proviso that the two latter were "to change in four months."[1] This is the first formal imposition of a "time limit" in the history of American itinerancy. At the Conference of 1774 we find a list of six standard Annual Conference questions introduced, and to the appointments this note is appended: "All the preachers to change at half the year's end."[2] From the minutes of the next year, 1775, it is evident that quarterly and possibly more frequent changes were often made; but "to change in one quarter" and "at half the year's end" seem to have become standing formulas of ministerial appointment.[3] Six months, however, became the first normal time limit in American Methodism: in 1782, Question 7 is, "How are the preachers to change after six months?" and full directions are given at the Annual Conference session for the biennial change.[4] So far as we have noted, these are all the references to the subject in the minutes from 1773 to 1784. For the period now under review, however, the Rev. John Lednum declares that the quarterly meeting which Superintendent Coke and Presbyter Whatcoat attended at Barratt's Chapel in Delaware, where Asbury and Coke first met and fell into each other's arms, was the regular fall quarterly meeting at this chapel, at which it was the custom for the semiannual change to take place among the preachers laboring on the Peninsula.[5] At this quarterly meeting Asbury proposed and the preachers present united in calling the Christmas Conference for the organization of the Church.

In 1776 the Conference met for the first time in Baltimore, and we have some indications of how a young itinerant began his career. Freeborn Garrettson records that he passed an examination, and received from Mr. Rankin a written license. The Conference of 1777 closed the energetic Rankin's administration; that year he made the appointments for the fifth and last time. He left thirty-six itinerant preachers where he had found ten, and just six times as many members as composed the infant Church when he became general assistant or superintendent. Mr. Wesley had "clothed Mr. Rankin with powers

[1] Minutes, Ed. of 1795, p. 6. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 10. [3] *Ibid.*, pp. 14, 15. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 52.
[5] History of the Rise of Methodism in America, Ed. of 1862, p. 410.

superior to any which had been vested in his predecessors in office," remarks Dr. Bangs, "in the faithful exercise of which he set himself to purifying the societies from corrupt members, and restoring things to order. It was soon found that the discharge of this duty, however painful, instead of abridging the influence of ministerial labor, greatly extended it, and exerted a most salutary effect upon the societies." [1] Mr. Asbury's testimony is: "Though he will not be admired as a preacher, yet as a disciplinarian he will fill his place."

In 1778 Asbury was in enforced retirement in Delaware, and the Conference was held in May under the presidency of William Watters, the first American itinerant preacher. The irregular Delaware Conference of 1779 recognized Asbury as general assistant on account of his seniority in America and original appointment by Mr. Wesley, and formally accorded him supreme control: "On hearing every preacher for and against what is in debate, the right of determination shall rest with him according to the minutes." [2] The regular Conference assembled at Fluvanna, probably under the presidency of Philip Gatch, to whom we are indebted for the later rule for the trial of members which substituted the original clerical right of excommunication. From the beginning, as is evident from the record of the quarterly meeting of 1772, and particularly during the Revolutionary War, which was now actively waging, the need of the administration of the Christian sacraments had pressed heavily on the American Methodists, who could no longer command the services of the English clergy, many or most of whom as loyalists had retired from the colonies. Strawbridge had probably been ordained: it is certain he was the first Methodist preacher to administer the sacraments in America. Few Methodists of to-day would doubt the right, or even the expediency, of the origination of orders by the Fluvanna Conference, composed of public and recognized ministers of the gospel, who had long labored in word and doctrine among the people. Their action was as valid as that of the British Conference of 1836, which, as was pointed out in the last chapter, independently initiated ministerial orders by the imposition of the hands of chief Conference officers who had not themselves

[1] Bangs's History of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Ed. of 1839, I. 80, 81. [2] Minutes, Ed. of 1795, p. 29.

been ordained, thus cutting completely loose from all pretension to any sort of tactual succession, whether episcopal or presbyterial. This Fluvanna Conference appointed a presbytery composed of Gatch, Ellis, and Foster, to be assisted by Cole, if his services were needed, and authorized these brethren to administer the sacraments themselves, and jointly to ordain. Jesse Lee declares:

> The committee thus chosen first ordained themselves, and then proceeded to ordain and set apart other preachers for the same purpose, that they might administer the holy ordinances to the Church of Christ. The preachers thus ordained went forth preaching the gospel in their circuits as formerly, and administered the sacraments wherever they went, provided the people were willing to partake with them. Most part of our preachers in the south fell in with this new plan; and as the leaders of the party were very zealous, and the greater part of them very pious men, the private members were influenced by them, and pretty generally fell in with their measures. However, some of the old Methodists would not commune with them, but steadily adhered to their former customs.[1]

The Asburyan Conference of the following year strongly and unanimously disapproved this Virginia departure from the original Methodist plan, and resolved that "we look upon them no longer as Methodists in connection with Mr. Wesley and us until they come back."[2] All the loyal itinerants were required to hold a license annually renewed by Asbury; the trusteeships of the preaching houses were carefully guarded; and Asbury, Garrettson, and Watters were appointed commissioners to the southern Conference to negotiate a union on the condition that the southerners "suspend all their ministrations for one year, and all [north and south] meet together at Baltimore."[3] These commissioners attended the regular Conference at Manakintown in May, 1780, and were successful in their mission: American Methodist ordinations and sacraments ceased until Dr. Coke's arrival and the meeting of the Christmas Conference in 1784.

At the Conference of 1781 the itinerants resolved "to preach the old Methodist doctrine, and strictly enforce the discipline as contained in the notes, sermons, and minutes as published by Mr. Wesley."[4] The Fluvanna (or regular) Conference of 1779 had enacted that the ministerial probationers of that year should be continued on trial a second year until the next Conference:[5]

[1] Short History of the Methodists, 1810, pp. 69, 70. [2] Minutes, Ed. of 1795, p. 38. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 39. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 41. [5] *Ibid.*, p. 33.

the reunited Conference of 1781 resolved that it would be better, "considering how young they [the preachers] are in age, grace, and gifts, to try them two years, unless it be one of double testimony, of whom there is a general approbation."[1] This period of probation for admission into full connection with Conference has never been changed: for one hundred and fifteen years American Methodist preachers have been subjected to this two years' trial of their ministerial character and efficiency before admission to full Conference rights and standing. At this Conference assistants, or preachers in charge, were also forbidden to employ local preachers without consultation with Mr. Asbury or the senior assistants. The germs of a Conference course of study also appear in the direction to the preachers "often to read the Rules of the Societies, the Character of a Methodist, and the Plain Account."[2]

Since the schism of 1779 and 1780, in each of which years two Conferences were held, the Conference, justifying its course by Mr. Wesley's precedent in holding a Conference in Ireland, had continued to meet in two sections, the first session of 1781 being held at Choptank, in Delaware, and of 1782 at Ellis's, in Virginia, while the final sessions of both years were held in Baltimore. There are indications of a growing legislative and electoral independence on the part of the preachers, which fully asserted itself as early as 1782. It will be remembered that the Delaware Conference of 1779 had given Mr. Asbury the decision of all questions introduced and debated in Conference: the Conference of 1782 framed its question recognizing Mr. Asbury's station and authority somewhat differently: "Do the brethren in Conference unanimously choose brother Asbury to act according to Mr. Wesley's original appointment, and preside over the American Conferences and the whole work?" To the question thus modified an affirmative answer is recorded. The American general assistant no longer exercised the absolute authority formerly accorded him, like that Mr. Wesley used in England and exercised by Mr. Rankin during his administration in the colonies. Mr. Asbury held office by the double tenure of Mr. Wesley's appointment and Conference election; but the last was immediate and essential, though embodying a recognition of the former. Majority rule thus began

[1] Minutes, Ed. of 1795, p. 42. [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 42, 43.

to manifest itself. Accordingly, at the Christmas Conference in 1784 Asbury himself insisted on election to the episcopal office by the Conference, notwithstanding Mr. Wesley's designation, and in that body all measures were decided by a majority of votes. As late as 1787 there was trouble between the Americans and Mr. Wesley on this point. "Mr. Wesley had appointed Mr. Whatcoat a superintendent," deposes Thomas Ware, "and instructed Dr. Coke to introduce [*i. e.*, to reintroduce] a usage among us, to which, I may say, there was not one of the preachers inclined to submit, much as they loved and honored him. Mr. Wesley had been in the habit of calling his preachers together, not to legislate, but to confer. Many of them he found to be excellent counselors, and he heard them respectfully on the weighty matters which were brought before them; but the right to *decide* all questions he reserved to himself. This he deemed the more excellent way; and, as we had volunteered and pledged ourselves to obey [in 1784], he instructed the doctor, conformably to his own usage, to put as few questions to vote as possible, saying: 'If you, brother Asbury and brother Whatcoat, are agreed, it is enough.' To place the power of deciding all questions discussed, or nearly all, in the hands of the superintendents, was what could never be introduced among us—a fact which we thought Mr. Wesley could not but have known, had he known us as well as we ought to have been known by Dr. Coke." [1]

Under the head of this same year 1782, which we have now reached, Jesse Lee gives an exact account of the legislative powers and relations of the two Conference sessions, Virginia and Baltimore:

> The work had so increased and spread that it was now found necessary to have a Conference in the south every year, continuing the Conference in the north as usual. Yet, as the Conference in the north was of the longest standing, and withal composed of the oldest preachers, it was allowed greater privileges than that in the south; especially in making rules and forming regulations for the societies. Accordingly, when anything was agreed to in the Virginia Conference and afterwards disapproved of in the Baltimore Conference, it was dropped. But if any rule was fixed and determined on at the Baltimore Conference, the preachers in the south were under the necessity of abiding by it. The southern Conference was considered at that time as a convenience, and designed to accommodate the

[1] Sketches of the Life and Travels of Rev. Thomas Ware, Ed. 1842, pp. 129, 130.

preachers in that part of the work, and to do all the business of a regular Conference, except that of making or altering particular rules.[2]

This all-important passage of Lee's, in immediate connection with the Conferences of 1782, together with the modified question concerning Mr. Asbury in the minutes of the same year, indicates very fully and accurately the legislative and electoral powers of the Conferences and their president's relation to them —all of which differ very widely from what we now know as Annual Conferences—and the governmental regimen under which the American Methodists lived from at least the year 1782 forward. The itinerant preachers had steadily acquired legislative independence and authority, and in 1784 responded cheerfully and generally to Asbury's call to attend the organizing Christmas Conference and consider the plans of Mr. Wesley. Three remaining questions and answers in the minutes of 1782 indicate increasing organization and solidification of the itinerant system:

Quest. 12. What shall be done to get a regular and impartial supply for the maintenance of the Preachers?

Answ. Let everything they receive, either in money or clothing, be valued by the preachers and stewards at quarterly meeting, and an account of the deficiency given in to the Conference, that he may be supplied by the profits arising from the books and the Conference collections.

Quest. 13. How shall we more effectually guard against disorderly traveling Preachers?

Answ. Write at the bottom of every certificate, The authority this conveys is limited to next Conference.

Quest. 14. How must we do if a Preacher will not desist after being found guilty?

Answ. Let the nearest Assistant stop him immediately. In brother Asbury's absence, let the preachers inform the people of these rules.[2]

From even those days of primitive organization antedating the Christmas Conference till these, "the profits arising from the books and the Conference collections" have continued a source of supply for the commissary of the ceaselessly moving army of American itinerants; and the regulations of the Church for controlling her disorderly representatives have gone on multiplying. Here the first period in the history of American itinerancy naturally ends: such were the general conditions in which the convening of the Christmas Conference found the American Methodists.

[1] Short History of the Methodists, 1810, pp. 78, 79. [2] Minutes, Ed. of 1795, p. 54.

CHAPTER VII.

The Itinerancy (Concluded).

The chief significance of the Christmas Conference for American itinerancy and for American Methodism is its initiation of ministerial orders among the American preachers, and its bestowal of the Christian sacraments upon the American Societies. This was in effect, as we have before seen, to constitute a Church. That these orders and sacraments were Mr. Wesley's chief design in sending over Coke and his companions is clearly evident, both from the oft-quoted Bristol circular letter and from the parchments of Coke and Whatcoat. The Christmas Conference made no change in the system of Conference government under which it found the American preachers and Societies. All the electoral powers exercised by itself it expressly confided to the Annual Conference, which continued the use of the legislative powers which it had begun to exercise before the Christmas Conference met. The necessities of government, particularly of adequate and prompt legislation, which gave birth to the General Conference, did not then exist, and did not actually produce this organ and system of government until after the Council had been tried and found wanting. After a brief session, this organizing body expired—to live no more forever. That it was not itself a General Conference, in any legal or Disciplinary sense, is evident, not only from the fact that no such institution is known to American Methodist law, as recorded in the Minutes and Disciplines from 1773 to 1791; but, among a score or more of other reasons which we need not tarry to recite in this connection, because it did not sustain the relation of a supreme and final lawmaker to the Annual Conferences which met in the interval, 1785 to 1791, between its own adjournment and the assembling of the General Conference of 1792. Such unchangeable legal supremacy

over the Annual Conferences till the meeting of its successor is an essential characteristic of every General Conference. Since its legislation was alterable and altered by the Annual Conferences from 1785 to 1791, resulting in the issue of annual editions of the Discipline of the Church, each of which superseded the authority of its predecessor, it is plain to a demonstration (1) that the Christmas Conference was not a General Conference; (2) that the General Conference of 1792 was not a successor of the Christmas Conference, since it sustains no such relation to that body as all subsequent General Conferences, from 1796 to 1894, sustain to their predecessors; (3) that the interval from 1785 to 1792 cannot be included within the period of the government of our Church by the authority of General Conferences; (4) that the General Conference of 1792 was the first; and (5) that the Christmas Conference is not entitled to recognition in the series of General Conferences.

The Church thus organized was an Episcopal Church: (1) by expressly chosen title; (2) by the sure and certain testimony of contemporary documents and witnesses; (3) by the preceding affiliations of the Societies and their founder and American leaders; (4) by its threefold ordinations, first in England and then in America; (5) by virtue of the nonexistence of an Episcopal Church in this country at the time of the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church, this nonexistence being expressly assigned as the sufficient reason for creating this Church. It was not a secession. There was nothing to secede from. It was not a schism. There was no episcopally organized body of Christ in America in which to create a schism. Since it did not exist, the American Methodists could not be in communion with any such body. If the single point be allowed that presbyters can make a bishop, and that when he is made he is made, the subsequently organized Protestant Episcopal Church is itself, according to its own principles, a schismatic body in this New World. The deacons, elders, and superintendents of the Methodist Episcopal Church were the American equivalents, in name and fact, of the deacons, priests, and bishops of the English Church. The Fluvanna orders and sacraments, though rational and scriptural, had lapsed and ceased; repudiated at the time by Asbury and those acting with him, and abandoned by those who

promoted and originated them, the action of Mr. Wesley and the Christmas Conference was the final exclusion of the Fluvanna plan and conception, with its results, from the organization of American Methodism. This exclusion proceeded to the extent of reordaining men who had been ordained by the Fluvanna presbytery, and the episcopal idea was emphasized by the three ordinations of Asbury on as many successive days. Acknowledging with all our heart the validity of those Fluvanna ordinations, and of all presbyterial and congregational orders, we must still cling as an historian to the undoubted fact that Mr. Wesley and the Christmas Conference fully intended the organization of a valid American Episcopal Church, and deliberately conformed, according to their convictions of scriptural teaching and views of ancient precedent, to all the conditions necessary to effect the legitimate and permanent founding of such a Church to succeed the Church of England in the American states. The result was the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America.

In this fully constituted Episcopal Church itinerancy continued to be a distinguishing feature, as it had been in the American Societies from 1773 or earlier to 1784. Its history throughout that period we have carefully traced. A rapid survey of the facts and principles of its continued existence and development to the present day will complete our task. The episcopacy and the presiding eldership, as related to each other, to the itinerancy, and to the Church, have already passed under review. No slightest modification of the appointing power has ever taken place. O'Kelly's proposal of liberty of appeal from the bishop to the Conference when the appointment was not satisfactory was overwhelmingly defeated in the first General Conference of 1792. In 1800, when, on the election of Whatcoat, many attempts, some of them fathered by Coke, were made variously to modify the appointing power of the new bishop before his election, nothing was done. In 1820–1824 a like failure attended all the efforts of the radical reformers to engraft the presiding eldership on the episcopacy as a legal element of the appointing power. The bishop does not share this responsibility with cabinet or laymen. Relief comes in the changing presidency of the Annual Conferences. The inalienable remedy, moreover, of the dissatisfied itinerant is loca-

tion. The itinerancy rests upon a voluntary compact of mutual satisfaction, which may be dissolved at the will of either party, exercised according to law made and provided. The Church does not lay upon any one of her members or local preachers the duties of an itinerant preacher. The initiative is with the individual who seeks a recommendation from the proper lower court, and becomes a candidate for admission on trial—not into a particular Annual Conference, which is merely one of a number of coördinate agents of the Church for performing this function, but into the "traveling connection." Hence the itinerant's vow on reception into full connection to "do that part of the work which we advise, at those times and places which we judge most for his [God's] glory." Hence the prerogative of transfer to be freely exercised by the episcopacy in fixing the appointments of the preachers. Since the obligations of itinerancy are freely assumed and continued by the individual preacher, and since the Church assumes through the Annual Conference the prerogative of annually determining the "relation" of the preacher, whether it shall be that of an "effective" preacher, a superannuate, a supernumerary, or merely that of a local preacher, if in the judgment of the Conference he becomes "so unacceptable, inefficient, or secular as to be no longer useful in his work," there resides also in the blameless itinerant the power and right of discontinuing these voluntarily assumed duties of itinerancy whenever for reasons satisfactory to himself he becomes unwilling, or judges himself unable, to continue their discharge. The Church does the itinerant no injustice whenever for the Disciplinary reasons she locates him without his consent. He cannot force himself on an unwilling Conference and people. The itinerant does the Church no injustice when, having completed the faithful performance of the work assigned him, and maintained his integrity as a minister of Christ, he, at the annual season when the Church measures, judges, and readjusts him in his ministerial relations, gives notice of his desire to retire to the local ranks. The Church cannot force a blameless, unwilling man to continue his itinerancy.

The advantages of Methodist itinerancy may be summed up under the following heads:

1. Every variety of talent is made available. Our churches

vary greatly; so do our ministers. If a fit junction of preacher and people can be effected by a wise appointing power, all classes of people are served, and all classes of ministers, even those capable of but limited usefulness, are brought into service. The Lord of the harvest calls many men of many minds; the itinerancy sends them into his harvest.

2. Each itinerant's life work is made to cover a wider field, and probably in a large majority of instances to yield larger results. Careful statistics show that the average Methodist pastorate is longer than that of most denominations with the so-called "settled" pastorate. If a Methodist pastorate among us is never longer than four years, it is seldom shorter than one. Presbyterian and Baptist pastorates of six months, three months, one month, are not rare. Most men who have spent four years in a single field can accomplish more for the next four years in a new field; and a new man of no greater ability will be likely to do more in the field just abandoned by his equal.

3. No Methodist itinerant preacher is left without an assigned sphere of ministerial duty or denied the means of support. In contrast with the many idle ministers of other denominations, this is no mean excellence of itinerancy.

4. No Methodist Church can be left above a few weeks without a pastor. The pastorless flock is practically unknown in Methodism.

5. Separations of preachers and people the continuance of whose relations has become unprofitable or undesirable are effected in the easiest manner by the interposition of an external authority whose jurisdiction is acknowledged by both. Ministers do not linger on for years in charge of particular congregations after their usefulness is ended. Congregations are not rent into factions over the calling, continuance, or dismissal of ministers.

A few items of general interest may be gathered up here in concluding our history of itinerancy. In 1804 the General Conference limited the appointing power of the bishops by fixing the extent of the pastoral term at two years. So it remained among us until 1866, when the General Conference extended the limit to four years, at which it has now remained for thirty years. There is very general satisfaction with the law as it

stands, and it is safe to predict that no change will be made for many years to come. Some notions of the exclusive validity of episcopal ordinations lingered in the Church until quite a late date. In 1824 Roszel moved in the General Conference that when a minister "has been regularly ordained by a bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church, such ordination shall be, and hereby is, considered valid." In 1836 John Early moved, and it was carried, "that the bishops be requested to select some suitable and competent person to prepare for publication a vindication of our episcopal ordination." The validity of presbyterial and congregational orders has long since ceased to be a question in Methodism; but the history and legislation, actual and proposed, from the founding of our Church down to as late as 1836, demonstrate the historical falsity of the note prefixed to the office for the consecration of a bishop by order of the Northern General Conference of 1884. 1884 has no standing against 1784 as a witness to the history of the making of Methodism, and however accurately the note of 1884 may represent the present sentiments of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the North, it is demonstrably without historical foundation.

THE GENESIS OF THE GENERAL AND ANNUAL CONFERENCES.

I. The Origin of the Christmas Conference.

II. The Organization, Membership, and Minutes of the Christmas Conference.

III. Sources of the History of the Christmas Conference.

IV. The Historical Development.

V The Baltimore Conference System of Government in American Methodism.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Genesis of the General and Annual Conferences.

I. The Origin of the Christmas Conference.

The history of the calling of the body generally known as the Christmas Conference, at which the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized, may be briefly, but completely and precisely, given. When Dr. Coke, whom John Wesley had previously "set apart as a superintendent, by the imposition of" his "hands, and prayer,"[1] with Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey, each of whom the same scriptural *episcopus* had "set apart for the said work [of the ministry in America], as an elder,"[2] landed in New York, Wednesday, November 3, 1784, the new American "joint superintendent,"[3] thus ordained and commissioned, makes the following entry in his Journal:

> I have opened Mr. *Wesley's* plan to brother *Dickins*, the travelling-preacher stationed at this place, and he highly approves of it, says that all the preachers most earnestly long for such a reformation, and that brother *Asbury*, he is sure, will consent to it. He presses me earnestly to make it public, because, as he most justly argues, Mr. *Wesley* has determined the point, though Mr. *Asbury* is most respectfully to be consulted in respect to every part of the execution of it. By some means or other, the whole continent, as it were, expects me. Mr. *Asbury* himself has *for some time* expected me.[4]

So far as appears from the record, Dr. Coke declined Mr.

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[1] The language of Coke's "letters of episcopal orders" (so entitled in the Discipline of 1789, p. 4): see the facsimile reproduction of Coke's parchment: London, 1881.

[2] Whatcoat's Certificate of Ordination: Life of Whatcoat, by Benjamin St. James Fry, pp. 43, 44.

[3] So styled in Mr. Wesley's circular letter, dated September 10, 1784.

[4] *Arminian Magazine*, Philadelphia, May, 1789, p. 242; The Methodist Review, September, 1896, p. 7; Tigert's edition of Coke's Journal, p. 7. The italics of the original are retained.

Dickins's advice to make public "Mr. Wesley's plan" at New York; but at Philadelphia, Sunday, November 7, after preaching to the Methodists in the evening, having preached morning and afternoon at St. Paul's for the Episcopalians, the doctor "opened to the society our new plan of church-government," and, he adds, "I have reason to believe that they all rejoice in it."[1] On the following Sunday, November 14, 1784, Dr. Coke and Mr. Asbury met for the first time at Barratt's Chapel, in Delaware. The following is Coke's account of the steps then and there taken for the calling of the Christmas Conference:

After dining in company with eleven of the preachers at our sister *Barret's*, about a mile from the chapel, I privately opened our plan to Mr. *Asbury*. He expressed considerable doubts concerning it, which I rather applaud than otherwise; but informed me that he had received some intimations of my arrival on the continent; and as he thought it probable I might meet him on that day, and might have something of importance to communicate to him from Mr. *Wesley*, he had therefore called together a considerable number of the preachers to form a council; and if they were of opinion that it would be expedient immediately to call a conference, it should be done. They were accordingly called, and, after debate, were unanimously of opinion that it would be best immediately to call a conference of all the travelling-preachers on the continent. We therefore sent off *Freeborn Garretson* like an arrow, the whole length of the continent, or of our work, directing him to send messengers to the right and left, and to gather all the preachers together at *Baltimore*, on *Christmas-Eve*.[2]

Mr. Asbury's entry concerning the communications of Dr Coke and the calling of the Conference, under the same date, is as follows:

I was shocked when first informed of the intention of these my brethren in coming to this country: it may be of God. My answer then was, if the preachers unanimously choose me, I shall not act in the capacity I have hitherto done by Mr. Wesley's appointment. The design of organizing the Methodists into an Independent Episcopal Church was opened to the preachers present, and it was agreed to call a general conference, to meet at Baltimore the ensuing Christmas; as also that brother Garrettson go off to Virginia to give notice thereof to our brethren in the South.[3]

These contemporary records of the two chief participants in the "council" at Barratt's, which called the Christmas Confer

[1] See the same page of all the publications mentioned in the preceding footnote. [2] *Arminian Magazine*, Philadelphia, May, 1789, pp. 243, 244; The Methodist Review, September, 1896, p. 8; Tigert's edition of Coke's Journal, p. 8. [3] Asbury's Journal, edition of 1821, i. 376. Asbury's date is Sunday, November 15, but the day of the month is clearly wrong by one day.

BARRATT'S CHAPEL, KENT CO., DEL.,

Where American Methodists first received the Sacraments from their own Ministers, where Coke and Asbury first met, and where the Council of Preachers called the Christmas Conference to organize the Church.

ence, take us to the fountain head of information, whence all the authorities draw. A simple analysis of these primitive accounts of the genesis of the Christmas Conference by Dr. Coke and Mr. Asbury yields these results:

(1) The Christmas Conference was not of appointment in "Mr. Wesley's plan" for "organizing the Methodists into an Independent Episcopal Church," but Mr. Asbury, expecting the interview with Dr. Coke, had "called together a considerable number of the preachers to form a council." These preachers "were accordingly called, and, after debate, were unanimously of opinion that it would be best immediately to call a conference of all the traveling preachers on the continent"; or, substituting Mr. Asbury's language for Dr. Coke's, Mr. Wesley's "design of organizing" having been "opened to the preachers present," "it was agreed to call a general conference." Here it may be added that Mr. Wesley's documents sent by the hand of Coke, and Coke's and Whatcoat's parchments, are silent as to any new Conference, either for the organization or for the government of the American Church, whose first superintendent and elders Mr. Wesley had taken the liberty, if liberty it was, of selecting and ordaining. In view of Mr. Wesley's ordinations, parchments, circular letter, and liturgy, his directions concerning Mr. Asbury's joint superintendency, and his silence as to any general gathering of the preachers to pass on these measures and plans, well might Mr. Dickins "most justly argue," when informed of the character in which, and the instructions with which, Dr. Coke and his attendant presbyters came, that "Mr. Wesley had determined the point," and, since it was scarcely evident that anything more needed to be done, "earnestly press" Superintendent Coke "to make it public" and proceed to the execution of it. This publicity to "our new plan of church-government" Dr. Coke actually gave at Philadelphia November 7, 1784: an act of unpardonable indiscretion if the execution of the plan hinged in Mr. Wesley's instructions upon the approval of it by a conference of the preachers yet to be assembled.[1]

[1] In the London edition of extracts from Dr. Coke's Journal (1793) the language is stronger: "He presses me most earnestly to make it public, because, as he most justly argues, Mr. Wesley has determined the point, and therefore it is not to be investigated, but complied with." We here content ourself with the milder but sufficient statement of the American edition.

(2) Dr. Coke, having been ordained and commissioned, did not take the initiative for assembling a called Conference: that it was a called body is now evident from both of these contemporary accounts. Neither in his personal or official position, nor in his instructions from Mr. Wesley, does it appear that he discovered any ground for calling a "conference of all the traveling preachers on the continent."

(3) That the twelfth and last Conference before the Episcopal organization of American Methodism, which was "begun at Ellis's Preaching-House, Virginia, April 30th, 1784, and ended at Baltimore May 28th, following,"[1] had nothing to do with the origination, calling, or organization of the Christmas Conference, it is scarcely necessary to state. That conference adjourned to meet in three sections—what we may call the Carolina, Virginia, and Baltimore divisions, in 1785—and these three meetings were all held accordingly, though not at the dates specified in the spring of 1784. The Christmas Conference was clearly a called meeting unexpectedly interpolated between the regular sessions of the American Conference. It was not appointed by the Conference which preceded it; nor did it appoint the Conference or Conferences which followed it.[2]

(4) Mr. Asbury did not assume the personal responsibility of calling the Conference in his official capacity as general assistant. Since the irregular Delaware Conference of 1779, and the reconciliation of the Virginia Conference in 1780, and particularly since the action of the Conference of 1782, when he was unanimously chosen to "preside over the American Conferences and the whole work," Mr. Asbury's powers as general assistant had been very great; and had he chosen to exercise them in calling the whole body of preachers together, there is little doubt that he might have done so in full confidence of prompt and implicit obedience. That the project of a called Conference originated with him ample evidence has been adduced. That there were delicacies of personal relationship and official position which made it improper for him to call the Conference on

[1] P. 65 of "Minutes of the Methodist Conferences, Annually held in America, From 1773 to 1794, inclusive": 1795. [2] In the "Minutes of the Methodist Conferences, Annually held in America, From 1773 to 1794, inclusive," the proceedings of the Christmas Conference are recorded under one series of minute questions with those of the other three Conferences of the year 1785. The last question appoints the Conferences for 1786. See p. 83.

his sole personal and official responsibility seems equally clear. His situation and motives will appear under the next head.

(5) In the context of the passage cited above from Mr. Asbury's Journal, he says that after Dr. Coke's sermon at Barratt's, Sunday, November 14, he "was greatly surprised to see brother Whatcoat assist by taking the cup in the administration of the sacrament." Immediately follows the language: "I was shocked when first informed of the intention of these my brethren in coming to this country: it may be of God. My answer then was, if the preachers unanimously choose me, I shall not act in the capacity I have hitherto done by Mr. Wesley's appointment." Dr. Coke confirms: "I privately opened our plan to Mr. Asbury. He expressed considerable doubts concerning it, which I rather applaud than otherwise." There were thus two delicacies or difficulties in Asbury's situation: *(a)* this introduction of the sacraments among the American Methodists; and *(b)* his own ordination as a joint superintendent—the joint superintendent being in his view only the ordained general assistant—by Mr. Wesley's sole appointment, without the unanimous choice of the preachers. His record on the sacramental question is well known and need not detain us, especially as the acceptance of the ordination proposed carried with it the acceptance of the validity of the sacraments administered by those in the orders bestowed by Mr. Wesley through Coke, Whatcoat, and Vasey. Asbury had stoutly withstood and conquered the Fluvanna brethren, and was an avowed Episcopalian in principle and practice. He had known Whatcoat in England, and was fully aware that he was not in orders then; though he had never met Dr. Coke before, he was doubtless cognizant that he was a clergyman of the Church of England. He was "surprised," therefore, at Whatcoat's taking the cup, and needed time for investigation and reflection, when informed of what Mr. Wesley had done, before he could assimilate this ordination with the principles he had long cherished—just as Dr. Coke himself similarly needed and took time when Mr. Wesley first proposed to bestow a third ordination on him. Asbury's second trouble was more serious. Dr. Coke, in his widely different situation, might accept appointment and ordination as a joint superintendent by Mr. Wesley's sole authority. Mr. Asbury could not. He had long enjoyed his official station of general assistant, out

of which the general superintendent was a development, by election of what Mr. Wesley himself had styled the American Conference,[1] as well as by Mr. Wesley's concurrent appointment. His tenure of office and his relation to the American Conference differed widely, therefore, from that of Dr. Coke, a total stranger appearing as Mr. Wesley's "foreign minister." Asbury could not with a good conscience put himself in the proposed position, accepting the proposed tenure. Hence the necessity of a called Conference. How was it to be brought about?

There was to be a Quarterly Meeting at Barratt's Chapel, in Kent county, Delaware.[2] Mr. Asbury had received some intimations of Dr. Coke's arrival in America. It was not difficult to "call together a considerable number of the preachers" at Barratt's "to form a council." "They were accordingly called," says Coke, "and, after debate, were unanimously of opinion that it would be expedient immediately to call a conference of all the traveling preachers on the continent." "The design of organizing the Methodists into an Independent Episcopal [the episcopal feature evidently impressed Asbury] Church," says Asbury, "was opened to the preachers present, and it was agreed to call a general conference." The Christmas Conference was called, not, indeed, by a Quarterly Conference, but by a body of preachers assembled for Quarterly Meeting purposes, convened as a special "council," Mr. Asbury initiating, and both he and Dr. Coke concurring, while the large number of laity present—Dr. Coke says there were five or six hundred communicants present at this first administration of the Lord's Supper among the American Methodists by their own ministers—took no part in the proceedings. When we shall come to

[1] Letter to America, October 3, 1783: Lee's History, pp. 85, 86. [2] Ezekiel Cooper, who was present, in a volume published thirty-five years afterwards, says: "On the 14th of the same month, November, they [Dr. Coke and Mr. Whatcoat] met Mr. Asbury, and about fifteen of the American preachers, at a Quarterly Meeting held in Barratt's Chapel, Kent county, State of Delaware."—P. 104 of the Funeral Discourse of Asbury, enlarged: 1819. Ledmun, Rise of Methodism in America, ed. 1862, p. 410, says that this Quarterly Meeting was "the fifth regular fall quarterly meeting held in the chapel, at which the semi-annual change took place among the preachers laboring in the Peninsula. Most of the preachers were present, and a large attendance of the laity." Freeborn Garrettson also testifies that he went with Dr. Coke "to a quarterly meeting held in Kent county," and that "about fifteen met in conference."—Bangs's Life of Garrettson, fifth ed., p. 134.

consider whether the Christmas Conference possessed any of the features of a convention, and, if possessing such features, in what sense it was a convention, and in what sense it was not such a body, reason will be found for our express mention of the non-action of the laity at this point.

This we judge to be a sufficiently exhaustive analysis of the evident facts, motives, principles, and purposes involved in the calling of the Christmas Conference. Further than the calling of the body we do not intend to proceed in the present section, and all after considerations based on the acts and records of the body itself are for the present excluded. If we have overlooked any data which would materially modify the foregoing analysis, it has been unintentional. Other sources have been searched—as the Minutes of the British Conference for 1784, at which the mission of Coke, Whatcoat, and Vasey was determined on—without yielding any evidence that the notion of the Christmas Conference had any being before it was born of the brain of Asbury and bodied forth in the action of the "council" at Barratt's. We are fully aware that no historical writer is called upon to prove a negative, as the four negative heads of the analysis given above might seem to imply; but when such an historian as Abel Stevens declares that the Christmas Conference was "held at the instance of Wesley,"[1] we may expect pardon for taking pains to dislodge so baseless an error. The positive proof of the actual method of the calling of the Conference might be taken, indeed, as a sufficient exclusion of the possible alternatives suggested by a knowledge of the existing historical situation, namely, that the Conference might have been called (1) by Mr. Wesley, (2) by Dr. Coke, acting under Mr. Wesley's instructions, (3) by the existing American Conference, or (4) by Mr. Asbury in his official capacity. This is practically what has been done above, though, in view of the numerous questions that have been or might be debated in this connection, it has been thought allowable formally to embrace the negative alternatives in the analysis and to call attention to the absence of evidence in these several directions. A much fuller and more vivid background of the ecclesiastical situation of the American Methodists on Coke's arrival might have been furnished; but, so far as this is necessary, it will be supplied later in this narrative.

[1] History of the M. E. Church, iii. 11.

and, for the rest, the reader must be satisfied that we have not written in ignorance by reference to other writings of this pen. Here, once for all, we may be permitted to point out that in denying the appointment of the Christmas Conference to Mr. Wesley or Dr. Coke or Mr. Asbury or the American Conference, and in assigning it to the "council" at Barratt's, there is no design of casting any shadow upon the nature, the degree, or the legitimacy of the authority exercised by the Christmas Conference, but only, by accurately and historically determining the source whence it sprang into being, so far to define the character of the body itself. That its great powers were self-derived will appear sufficiently at a later stage of our inquiry.

Concerning the Conference thus originated and called, the question arises whether it was a General Conference in the sense of the Discipline, *i. e.*, in the only sense which the term legally bears. If so, it should undoubtedly stand at the head of the series of the general legislatures of the Methodist Episcopal Church and of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, the series beginning thus in 1784 and continuing to the present time. Of this question an historical examination, final, if we can make it so, will be made in the following sections of this series of papers. But it is too early in this historical survey to raise definitively, the question of the legal or Disciplinary status of the Christmas Conference—its historical position from the standpoint of organic Methodist government in America. Not until we shall have examined the acts and records of the body, and the contemporaneous reports of its doings, can we rightly raise the question, whether Abel Stevens weighs his words when he calls the Christmas Conference "an extraordinary convention of the ministry,"[1] or whether the body is properly denominated the General Conference of 1784. These are intricate questions, and we must postpone their definitive consideration. At this stage of our inquiry we can only, at the risk of a little repetition, sum up the conclusions derivable from our survey of the facts and circumstances of the call of the body, as certified by contemporary evidence, namely:

(1) The Christmas Conference was a called Conference, unexpectedly intercalated between the regular sessions of the American Conference for 1784 and 1785;

[1] History of the M. E. Church, iii. 11.

(2) It was no part of "Mr. Wesley's plan" for the organization or government of the American Methodist Church;

(3) It was not provided for by the American Conference;

(4) Its necessity was not felt by Coke, either on the basis of his instructions or on that of his personal or official position;

(5) It was not called by Asbury individually and officially;

(6) It was called by a council of preachers, from eleven to fifteen in number, at Barratt's Chapel, Delaware, November 14, 1784, Asbury and Coke concurring;

(7) Its purpose was to pass on "the design of organizing the Methodists into an Independent Episcopal Church," *i. e.*, to take action on "Mr. Wesley's plan," involving a decision upon the appointment and ordination of superintendents, elders, and deacons—some of them already made and some of them yet to be made—and the acceptance of Mr. Wesley's provision of the sacraments for the American Methodists.

On this last-mentioned point, if we consider the antecedent sacramental controversy; the correspondence of the Americans with Mr. Wesley; his Bristol circular letter; his liturgy, containing forms, founded on those of the Church of England, for the ordination of superintendents, elders, and deacons; his ordinations with the attesting parchments, and his directions for ordinations; and last of all, the express words of Dr. Coke and Mr. Asbury, dated on the day of the calling of the Christmas Conference, we suppose it will not be questioned that that Conference was called to take action on Mr. Wesley's "plan"—the appointments, orders, and sacraments which he had provided for the American Church; that Mr. Asbury particularly saw and expressed the necessity for this action; and that, if all the elements of the "plan" were accepted and approved, it would result in the organization of an American Methodist Episcopal Church on this continent.

The sentence of the Bristol circular letter, "They [the American Methodists] are now at full liberty, simply to follow the Scriptures and the primitive church," does not in its connection imply more or other than that, being free from all civil and ecclesiastical control in England, the Americans could now, without schism, receive the orders and sacraments which Mr. Wesley, following the Scriptures and the primitive Church, had provided, thus organizing themselves into a Church. The pre-

ceding sentence is, "As our American brethren are now totally disentangled, both from the state and the English hierarchy, we dare not entangle them again, either with the one or the other." The two sentences are part of Mr. Wesley's fourth objection to desiring "the English bishops to ordain part of our preachers for America," and their clear import is that without breach of civil or ecclesiastical law or order, the Americans could now scripturally and according to pure, primitive precedent accept Mr. Wesley's orders and sacraments. Apart from these decisive considerations of the context, the language is entirely too general to be construed as directing or suggesting the calling of such a body as the Christmas Conference, evidently unanticipated by Dr. Coke, the bearer of the letter. If it were in evidence that Mr. Wesley anticipated a meeting of the American preachers, the most that can be said of the circular letter is that it contains no prohibition from Mr. Wesley of such a gathering.

No further question is raised at this point, unless it be by Mr. Asbury's employment of the words "general conference." Naturally they would be taken as the equivalent of Coke's phrase, "a conference of all the traveling preachers on the continent." In this sense it has never been disputed that the Christmas Conference was intended to be general—a gathering of all the preachers. Perhaps no one would attribute to these words a precise legal signification *before* the meeting of the Christmas Conference, no matter what the character of that body might prove to be. An examination of Asbury's use of the term "general conference" seems to confirm its wide, general meaning in this case. Of the first American Conference in 1773 he says, "Our general conference began."[1] Asbury's employment of even legally fixed terms is sometimes unique. As late as 1798, for example, he says: "Some of our local preachers complain that they have not a seat in the general annual conference."[2] But perhaps the most decisive passage in Asbury's Journal on his view as to the time of the establishment of the General Conference is found under date of Thursday, July 19, 1798. Referring to some accusations of James O'Kelly's, previous to the General Conference of 1792, he says:

> It was talked over in the yearly conference, for then we had no general conference established. . . . There was no peace with James, until Doctor

[1] Journal, i. 55, ed. 1821. [2] *Ibid.*, ii. 213, ed. 1821.

Coke took the matter out of my hands, after we had agreed to hold a general conference [in 1792] to settle the dispute: and behold when the general conference by a majority (which he called for) went against him, he treated the general conference with as much contempt, almost, as he had treated me.[1]

Here, after declaring that no General Conference had been established before, he applies the term three times in a precise sense contrasted with the previously existing government of the Church to the General Conference of 1792. "Then we had no general conference established": the name is denied to any previously established governing body of the Church, while in the same connection it is at once thrice applied to the body that we know met in 1792. In 1798, when this entry in his Journal was made, two General Conferences had certainly been held; the term had had legal definition in the Discipline since 1792, and Asbury in this case seems to discriminate in his use of legal language. Hence it would be premature, to say the least, to use his language of November 14, 1784, as determining in advance and of itself the legal character and status of the Christmas Conference, or even Asbury's opinion of it. Its general character was doubtless very prominent in his mind, and, in jotting down his daily record, he may have lighted on a form of words, very naturally expressive of this feature, which subsequently acquired a technical and legal force, just as he had done in 1773. Accordingly we leave that question for the present undecided.[2]

[1] Journal, ii. 321, ed. 1821. [2] The difficulties and dangers of a *merely verbal* proof, *i. e.*, one based upon the employment of particular words, especially when we have any reason to believe that the terms may subsequently have acquired a technical meaning, in contrast with a *real* proof, *i. e.*, one based upon an historical examination of the facts of the existing situation, when the materials exist for arriving at those facts, may be further illustrated by the circumstance that Asbury was probably familiar with the application of the term "general Conference" to the conferences annually held by Mr. Wesley in England. For in the text of "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection, as Believed and Taught by the Rev. Mr. John Wesley, From the Year 1725 to the Year 1765," as inserted in the Disciplines of 1791 and 1792, occurs this language: "To cast a fuller light on this important subject, I shall lay before the reader the Minutes of several of our general Conferences on this weighty, this momentous doctrine."—Discipline of 1791, p. 103; of 1792, p. 108. See, also, Discipline of 1801, p. 114; of 1805, p. 101; and of 1808, p. 99. This is evidently Mr. Wesley's language; but it should be added that in the texts of the Plain Account in the Disciplines of 1789 and 1790, it does not occur. Whether the omission was occasioned by the insertion of some hymns in these editions, omitted in the later, we cannot say. Nor are the means at hand for determining how early the language appeared in the English editions of the Plain Account. The point is unimportant save as an illustration of the possible dangers of merely verbal proof.

CHAPTER IX.

The Genesis of the General and Annual Conferences.

II. Organization, Membership, and Minutes of the Christmas Conference.

The net results of our historical inquiry into the origin of the Christmas Conference, as certified by contemporary evidence, were enumerated in the last chapter, and may be here recapitulated as follows: (1) The Christmas Conference was a called Conference, unexpectedly intercalated between the regular annual sessions of the American Conference of 1784 and 1785; (2) it was no part of Mr. Wesley's plan either for the organization or the government of the American Methodist Episcopal Church, that government continuing to rest, after the Christmas Conference as before, as we shall presently see in detail, in an annual assembly known as the "Conference"; (3) it was not provided for by any action of this existing American Conference; (4) its necessity was not foreseen by Dr. Coke, either on the basis of his instructions from Mr. Wesley or on that of his personal or official position; (5) it was not called by Mr. Asbury acting individually and officially; (6) it was called by a council of preachers, assembled for Quarterly Meeting purposes, but specially convened as a council, at Barratt's Chapel, Kent county, Delaware, Sunday, November 14, 1784, Asbury and Coke both concurring; (7) its purpose was to pass on "the design of organizing the Methodists into an Independent Episcopal Church," or to take action on "Mr. Wesley's plan," brought concretely to the notice of the council by the presence of a joint superintendent and an elder, appointed, ordained, and commissioned by Mr. Wesley—the nature and finality of which acts on his part might well call for examination by the Americans—by their administration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and subsequently of baptism, by their parchments of ordination, by a circular letter from Mr. Wesley to be hereafter more particu-

larly noticed, and by a Sunday Service compiled by Mr. Wesley and brought over in sheets by Dr. Coke. Thus this Council, according to strictly contemporary evidence, did not attempt to act on "Mr. Wesley's plan," nor to pass on the official character or acts of Dr. Coke and his associates, nor to accept, nor yet to organize, a government or a Church, but only "to call a conference of all the traveling preachers on the continent," which possessed inherent and rightful power to act, and which, when it had done substantially these things, as we shall presently see in full detail, dissolved, leaving the government of the Church in the hands of the annual Conference, still subject, as before, to an oversight and direction of Mr. Wesley.

In the interval between the call and the meeting of the Christmas Conference, *i. e.*, between November 14 and December 24, 1784, we find the following relevant notices in Asbury's Journal:

> Friday 26 [November]. I observed this day as a day of fasting and prayer, that I might know the will of God in the matter that is shortly to come before our conference; the preachers and people seem to be much pleased with the projected plan; I myself am led to think it is of the Lord. I am not tickled with the honor to be gained—I see danger in the way.—My soul waits upon God. O that he may lead us in the way we should go! Part of my time is, and must necessarily be, taken up with preparing for the conference.[1]

Observe: "*projected* plan"—the "Independent Episcopal Church," to use Asbury's own definite and vivid phrase of November 14, still sleeps in the womb of the future, and is yet to be called thence by a sovereign voice; "our conference," the Christmas Conference, is shortly to become, in an unshared and unique sense, the maker of American Episcopal Methodism and its government, legitimating by its free and full and adequate consent its episcopacy, its orders, and its sacraments, as emanating from Mr. Wesley himself.

Tuesday, November 30, Mr. Asbury "had an interesting conversation" with a clergyman "on the subject of the Episcopal mode of church-government," now so deeply engrossing his attention; and Saturday, December 18, makes this final entry:

> Saturday 18 [December]. Spent the day at Perry Hall, partly in preparing for conference. . . . Continued at Perry Hall until Friday the twenty-fourth. We then rode to Baltimore, where we met a few preachers.[2]

[1] Edition, 1821, i. 377.

[2] Journal, ed. 1821, i. 377; the remainder of this entry is reserved for citation elsewhere.

Coke had reached Perry Hall, the palatial mansion of Mr. Gough, the day before, and Whatcoat followed the day after: here, in comfort and with all necessary conveniences, Coke and Asbury and Whatcoat—the three English bishops of our Methodism—with Vasey, Mr. Wesley's other elder, and Black, from Nova Scotia, spent a delightful week immediately preceding the convening of the Christmas Conference, revising the Large Minutes (which in 1781 and again in 1784 had been accepted as binding by the American Conference, and which were to be taken as the basis of the First Discipline), and in making other preparations for the great task of Church-making that lay immediately before them.

The Christmas Conference convened in Lovely Lane Chapel, Baltimore, at 10 A.M. Friday, December 24, 1784.[1] There were but few preachers present on the first day, as we have seen on the testimony of Asbury cited above. But the number was subsequently largely increased. Coke writes, "We had near sixty of them present. The whole number is 81."[2] The Minutes of 1784, the last Conference preceding the organization of the Methodists into an Episcopal Church, show eighty-three preachers receiving appointments;[3] but of these eighty-three, notice of the decease of Caleb Pedicord and George Mair appears in the Minutes of 1785,[4] which include the minute business of the Christmas Conference recorded in one series of questions with the other Conferences of that year. This satisfactorily verifies Coke's exactness. The membership thus consisted of about three-fourths of all the traveling preachers on the continent. Jesse Lee, who was among those who failed to receive timely notice, and who was consequently not present, complains of Freeborn Garrettson's discharge of his duty as the messenger of the council at Barratt's:

> Mr. Freeborn Garrettson [says he] undertook to travel to the south, in order to give notice to all the travelling preachers of this intended meeting. But being fond of preaching by the way, and thinking he could do the business by writing, he did not give timely notice to the preachers who were in the extremities of the work; and of course several of them were not at that conference.[5]

[1] For the evidence for this date as against that appearing on the title-page of the Minutes or Discipline issued by this Conference, see Tigert's Constitutional History, p. 195.

[2] Journal, *Arminian Magazine*, Philadelphia, June, 1789, pp. 290, 291; THE METHODIST REVIEW, September, 1896, p. 13; Tigert's edition of Coke's Journal, p. 13.

[3] Pp. 66–69 of "Minutes of the Methodist Conferences, Annually held in America, from 1773 to 1794, inclusive," Philadelphia, 1795. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 79.

[5] A Short History of the Methodists, 1810, pp. 93, 94.

There is satisfactory evidence of the presence of the following twenty-nine persons at the Christmas Conference: Francis Asbury, William Black, Caleb Boyer, Le Roy Cole, Thomas Coke, James O. Cromwell, John Dickins, Edward Dromgoole, Ira Ellis, Reuben Ellis, Joseph Everett, Jonathan Forrest, Freeborn Garrettson, William Gill, William Glendenning, Lemuel Green, John Haggerty, Richard Ivey, Jeremiah Lambert, James O'Kelly, William Phœbus, Ignatius Pigman, Francis Poythress, Nelson Reed, John Smith, Thomas Vasey, Thomas Ware, William Watters, and Richard Whatcoat. The Rev. John Lednum nearly forty years ago identified a list of twenty-one names of ministers who "were certainly in attendance."[1] Dr. John Atkinson has since added eight names to the list, and drawn out at length the evidence for the presence of the whole twenty-nine.[2]

As to the organization of the Conference we have the evidence of the title-page of the Discipline of 1787, "arranged" and "methodized" by Asbury himself, that "The Reverend Thomas Coke, LL.D., and the Reverend Francis Asbury, presided."[3] Jesse Lee, whose careful accuracy is unsurpassed by any subsequent historian, declares that Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury presided.[4] Neither Coke nor Asbury mentions the point in his contemporary journal; nor elsewhere, so far as we have been able to discover. Whether they presided conjointly or alternately is a point on which there seems to be no evidence. Dr. John Pearson declares that "as Mr. Wesley's representative Dr. Coke took the chair, and read the terse and comprehensive letter of Mr. Wesley," but he cites no contemporary or early source for the statement, which seems to be his inference from the known circumstances.[5] Long years afterwards Asbury

[1] Rise of Methodism in America, ed. 1862, p. 413. The first edition of Lednum's History was issued in 1859.

[2] Centennial History of American Methodism, 1884, pp. 36–49. The original sources whence this evidence is taken are largely, if not mostly, accessible to the present writer; but it would needlessly encumber these pages to cite it.

[3] But two copies of this Discipline are known to be in existence, one the property of Mr. R. T. Miller, of Covington, Ky., and the other in the library of the Drew Theological Seminary. We have before us, besides Mr. Miller's original, three different reprints: one of Ketcham's fifty, No. 47; Nutter's, 1890; and Ingham's.

[4] Short History of the Methodists, 1810, p. 94.

[5] *Methodist Review* (New York), March, 1896, p. 265.

wrote to Joseph Benson concerning the Annual Conferences, "It was also my pleasure, when present, always to give Dr. Coke the president's chair."[1] Considering Coke's position as an already ordained "joint superintendent" with credentials from Mr. Wesley, to which position Asbury had not yet been elected and ordained, and his character as Mr. Wesley's agent for the impartation of orders and the organization of the Church, it is not improbable that he opened the Conference and gave initial direction to its business.

We have found nowhere the slightest trace of the election of any person to serve as secretary of the body. Such an officer seems to have been unknown in the early Methodist Conferences. From the first British Conference in 1744 to the last held by Mr. Wesley in 1790, the Minutes, as far as we can discover, contain no record of the appointment, election, or service of such an officer. From 1791 to 1896 the secretary's signature, with the president's, is appended to the Minutes annually, the succession of secretaries being Thomas Coke (1791–95, 1799, 1801–4, 1806–8, 1810–13); Samuel Bradburn (1796–98, 1800); Joseph Benson (1805, 1809); Jabez Bunting (1814–19, 1824–27), who may be said to have been the first permanent successor of Dr. Coke in the secretary's office; G. Marsden (1820); Robert Newton (1821–23, 1828–31, 1834–39, 1842–47), who must be regarded as the third permanent secretary; Edmund Grindrod (1832, 1833); John Hannah (1840, 1841, 1849, 1850, 1854–58); Joseph Fowler (1848); John Farrar (1851–53, 1859–69); J. H. James (1870); L. H. Wiseman (1871); George T. Perks (1872); Gervase Smith (1873, 1874); Henry W. Williams (1875–77); M. C. Osborne (1878–80); Robert N. Young (1881–85); David J. Waller (1886–94); and M. Hartley (1895, 1896).

The business throughout Mr. Wesley's lifetime presidency from 1744 to 1790 is recorded in the question and answer form: these questions and answers are the "Minutes of the Methodist Conferences." There are no minutes in our modern sense, from which may be gathered the hours of meeting and adjournment, the day of the Conference session on which any particular business was done, or the general order in which the business was brought forward, or the resolutions, motions, or other parliamentary steps by which action was matured and concluded, etc.

[1] Paine's McKendree, ii. 294.

The conclusion reached, whether doctrinal or governmental, the things done and to be done, were entered briefly under a standing or newly-devised minute question, and, so far as appears from the extant records, the early Methodists felt the need of, and made, no other record. In the absence of evidence, we are reduced to silence or more or less probable conjecture as to how and by whom this simple record was kept. It appears to us not unlikely that Mr. Wesley in the president's chair jotted down these questions and answers—as Bishop Keener continues to do on his blanks to this day, returning his report to the book editor's office—probably reading them over to the Conference at the close for the sake of accuracy; and that was the end of the matter until the preachers received the printed minutes from Mr. Wesley's press where they had been published under his own eye.

Such had been the uninterrupted custom in England from the time of the first Conference until the meeting of the Christmas Conference and for some years afterwards. In America, as late as 1796, the General Conference still adhered to the question and answer form of transacting and recording its business; the Minutes proper for 1796, after the record of two addresses prefixed, open abruptly with "Question 1. Are there any directions to be given concerning the yearly conferences?" without note of time, place, members, or officers, and continue without any parliamentary notice of presidency, sittings or adjournment, or other mark of time, without any record of committees, resolutions, or motions, through to "Question 22. When and where shall our next General Conference be held?" There are no signatures of presidents or secretary, and, so far as we have been able to discover, there is no trace of the election or service of such an officer as a secretary in the entire proceedings of the General Conference of 1796. Before the two addresses mentioned above, occurs a formal caption mentioning the time of meeting and the presidents of the Conference, but giving no hint of a secretary.[1] In 1800 the minutes are first denominated a Journal, the daily sessions of the Conference are for the first time noted, Nicholas Snethen is elected secretary, and his signature appears with Coke's at the end of the proceedings.[2]

[1] General Conference Journals, i. 7–29.
[2] *Ibid.*, i. 31–46.

Of the General Conference of 1792 no official minutes are extant. "The Minutes of the General Conference of 1792," says Dr. McClintock, the editor of the first published collected Journals, "were never printed to my knowledge, nor can I find the original copy"[1]—probably because none was ever made. For here steps to the front the tried and trusty Jesse Lee, the earliest historian of Methodism whose work attained general recognition,[2] who constantly aims at the nicest accuracy and the utmost attainable exactness on points of this kind. Says Lee:

> On the first day of November, 1792, the first regular general conference began in Baltimore. . . . At that general conference we revised the form of discipline, and made several alterations. The proceedings of that conference were not published in separate minutes, but the alterations were entered at their proper places, and published in the next edition of the form of discipline, which was the eighth edition.[3]

Here, though Lee at first says no more than that the proceedings had not been published as separate minutes—as the Minutes of the Annual Conferences had been since 1785—the latter part of his sentence seems to imply that no separate and distinct record was made at the time, "but *the alterations were entered at their proper places*" in the Form of Discipline, and thus published in the next edition thereof. Asbury also declares, "The general conference went through the Discipline, Articles of Faith," etc.[4] The title-page of this Discipline, which lies before us, is, "The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America, Revised and Approved at the General Conference held at Baltimore, in

[1] General Conference Journals, i. 4.

[2] It is a mistake, however, which we believe we are the first to detect and correct, to say that Jesse Lee's History was the earliest. We have in our possession "A Comprehensive History of American Methodism," appended to a Life of John Wesley, whose Preface bears date "Baltimore, June 13, 1807." Lee's Preface is dated "Petersburg, Virginia, October 28, 1809." Nor is this Life of Wesley mentioned in any of the attempted complete lists that we have seen.

[3] Short History of the Methodists, 1810, p. 176 *et seq.* The first sentence of the above quotation is on p. 176: the only copy we have now at hand, having been the property of Bishop McTyeire when he wrote his History, is so mutilated by clipping that we cannot give the exact page of the remainder. Anyone wishing to verify, however, will meet no difficulty in finding the passage.

[4] Journal, ed. 1821, ii. 147.

the State of Maryland, in November, 1792: in which Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury presided." Though this was the eighth edition, there having been a new Discipline issued every year since the meeting of the Christmas Conference, this was the first Methodist Discipline that bore on its title-page the approval of a body denominated "the General Conference." This fact is not without significance, especially when taken in connection with the accurate and pregnant language of Jesse Lee, who did not insert the term "regular" as mere ballast, "On the first day of November, 1792, the first regular general conference began in Baltimore." But this point will come up for fuller consideration in another connection, when we shall make some attempt at a more precise determination of the sense in which Jesse Lee employed this legal-looking word "regular."

It is not necessary for our present purpose to determine the exact time of the introduction of secretaries into the Annual Conferences, though it not improbably shortly preceded or followed the introduction of that officer into the General Conference of 1800[1]—the "third regular General Conference," as Lee (p. 264) calls it. There is no evidence of the existence of this officer in the Conferences of the people called Methodists on the continent of America in their Minutes from 1773 to 1794, first collected and published in a single volume in 1795, nor, so far as our search has revealed, in the writings of Lee, Asbury, and other of their contemporaries. Moreover, so far as we can appeal from printed to manuscript sources, the manuscript journal of the Rev. Philip Gatch, which was in the hands of the Rev. Leroy M. Lee, D.D., when he wrote his Life of Jesse Lee, shows, if proof is necessary, that the original records of the American Conferences were kept, as we might well suppose, in the simple

[1] Since the preceding was written, we find, on examining the printed Minutes of the South Carolina Conference for 1896, that for the sessions from the first in 1787 to 1798, the entry concerning the secretary is "Not known," while Jesse Lee was the *first* in 1799. This is unexpected confirmation of the conjecture of the text, based on the probability that the General Conference of 1800 simply imitated an example set shortly before by the Annual Conferences—which turns out to have been the case, at least so far as South Carolina was concerned—or, if the General Conference originated the custom, its example would be speedily followed in the Annual Conferences. The General Conference of 1800 (Journal i. 43), on motion of Bishop Asbury, first ordered the proceedings of Annual Conferences to be kept by a secretary, and this record sent to the General Conference.

question and answer form universal in England. This contemporary manuscript journal preserves Minutes, in the question and answer form, of the American Conferences of 1777 and 1779, which are chiefly valuable, of course, because they include a record which has been stricken or edited out of the printed Minutes. But they are also valuable as higher evidence on the point in question, confirming the oldest printed Minutes.[1] Thus up to the time of the meeting of the Christmas Conference, and until long afterwards, this simple question and answer form of recording Conference business was universal in England and America, and, indeed, has been continued to this day in the Minutes of the Wesleyan Conference in England, in the business of our own Annual Conferences, though with additions, and through all the editions of our Book of Discipline.

Now it so happens that with respect to the Christmas Conference American Methodism enjoys the extraordinary, if not unique, advantage of possessing, and of having always possessed, since the year of the adjournment of the Conference, *two* printed records of the business done in the Christmas Conference, both of them, in formal titles, called "Minutes," and both of them in this then universally current question and answer form. What more could one ask? What more could be rationally expected? Are we not, concerning the records of this body, singularly fortunate? And yet from time to time a wail goes up concerning the "lost minutes" of the Christmas Conference, or a confident hope is expressed that they may yet be recovered, or a shout is raised over the announcement of their actual discovery. Recover—discover—what? We have entered on this wide investigation of the forms of Conference organization, business, and record in England and America, and, with the patient indulgence of the reader, shall detain him on the point a little longer, to show that we have no reason to believe that the Christmas Conference ever put to record any form of "Minutes" other than those which have been transmitted to us,[2] and that consequently nothing has been lost and nothing is to be found.

Let us now sum up the state of the case. In England, until the death of Wesley in 1791, there is no record in the Minutes

[1] Dr. L. M. Lee's Life of Jesse Lee, pp. 78–81.

[2] A full description and examination of the two records, or "Minutes," of the Christmas Conference will fall naturally a little later in our narrative.

of the election or service of a secretary of the Conference. Moreover, these Minutes were kept in the simple question and answer form, without notice of the parliamentary processes by which the body was organized or conclusions were formulated and reached, which, indeed, continues substantially in England to this day. In America there is no record of the existence of a secretary of the General Conference until 1800; and this body was still adhering to the question and answer form of transacting and recording its business as late as 1796—twelve years after the Christmas Conference. The Annual Conferences, so far as appears, had no such recording officer until long after the Christmas Conference, and in these bodies, as we have uniform evidence, both printed and manuscript, from the very beginning until a period long subsequent to the Christmas Conference, the minutes were kept in the question and answer form, without other record. In 1792, in "the first regular General Conference," "the alterations were entered in their proper places" in the Form of Discipline, and thus published. This, as we shall immediately see, was doubtless in imitation of the example previously set by the Christmas Conference, and thus, for the same reasons, we have no such separate record of either body as that of 1796. In 1784, Coke and Asbury, during the week before the opening of the Conference spent at Perry Hall, prepared, assisted by the friendly counsel and aid of the other guests, a revision of the "rules or minutes," that is, a draft of questions and answers, based on the current edition of the Large Minutes, freely curtailed or supplemented, if we may judge from the final form adopted,[1] to be submitted to the approaching Conference. That the Conference altered largely the draft submitted by its presidents, we have no reason to suppose. The "conversations"—note the word—on the revision of Discipline did not begin until Monday morning, December 27, and continuing but a week, were interrupted by the elections of the elders and deacons, and the numerous preach-

[1] For a detailed comparison throughout of the Minutes of the Christmas Conference whose title runs "Minutes of Several Conversations between The Rev. Thomas Coke, LL.D., The Rev. Francis Asbury, and Others," etc., with the Large Minutes, the title of whose several editions runs in similar strain, "Minutes of Several Conversations between the Rev. Mr. John and Charles Wesley, and Others," see Robert Emory's History of the Discipline, 1844, pp. 25–79.

ing and ordination services. Coke preached every day at noon, "except on the Sundays and other ordination days, when the service began at ten o'clock, it generally lasting on those occasions four hours." So far as we have discovered in a careful perusal of Jesse Lee's entire History, it contains no hint of any "lost" or "missing" records of the Christmas Conference. It is improbable to the last degree, amounting to moral certainty, that any "minutes" in the modern parliamentary sense were ever kept. If Coke did not use the manuscript draft prepared by himself and Asbury at Perry Hall the week before, as finally adopted by the Conference, for printing his "Minutes" (the first Discipline)—which he put to the press in Philadelphia, between January 8 and January 19, 1785, within about two weeks of the adjournment of the Conference [1]—surely only the most captious objector could assert with the smallest degree of probability that these "Minutes," so promptly published by one of the presidents of the Conference, did not conform with precision to the actual doings of the body. Together with the pamphlet of annual minutes, first published later in this year, and subsequently incorporated in the volume of Minutes first collected and published in 1795,[2] which we have before us, these "Minutes" or "Discipline" of the Christmas Conference, contain, there is every reason to suppose, all the proceedings of the Christmas Conference that were ever officially put to record. In a most unusual degree these two forms of "Minutes," particularly the publication of Coke's at Philadelphia, in January, 1785, "composing a Form of Discipline," fulfill the most rigid conditions of official and contemporary records. In the present state of the evidence it is entirely safe to say that no historical inquirer need give himself the smallest concern about any supposed "lost minutes" of the Christmas Conference. Only the actual production of a hitherto unknown record of the body, of whose existence there is not the slightest proof or presumption, or direct contemporary, or approximately contemporary, testimony *ad rem* can shake the mass of presumptions and practically decisive evidence to the contrary. The probability of the production of such record or evidence, after an interval of one

[1] See Coke's Journal, January 8–19, and January 22, 1785, Tigert's ed., pp. 15, 16. Cf. Bishop Emory's Defense of our Fathers, p. 70.

[2] Lee's Short History of the Methodists, pp. 89, 118.

hundred and thirteen years, each reader may judge for himself. Until they are produced, the historian may safely rest in the conclusion that in the two records called "Minutes"—particularly in the one which became the First Discipline of the Church, for the earliest printed form of the other with which we are acquainted dates ten years later,[1] though it was first printed in 1785—we have the official, contemporaneous reports of the transactions of the Christmas Conference, and that there is no prospect that the revelations of the future will put us in possession of any other official, contemporary record of that historic body. Except for the prevalent notion, without historical foundation, to the contrary, it might not have been necessary to enter upon this investigation. But in addition to the entire absence of evidence for the existence of a missing record, we have in this instance many converging lines of evidence, based both upon a general and quite complete and exact knowledge of the practices of Methodist Conferences in those times, and also upon the circumstances attending the preparation for the Christmas Conference and the publication of its transactions, that none such was made; and, if not made, of course, not lost.

[1] How far this modifies the evidence derivable from this record will later come under review.

NOTE.—Further investigations, with some new materials, have but confirmed the doubts indicated in the text and footnote above. It is highly improbable that the original printed minutes of 1785 contained a record of the Christmas Conference. The assertion (p. 94) that we have had more than one record "since the year of the adjournment of the Conference," is not warranted by the evidence. See Chapters X. and XIII.

CHAPTER X.

The Genesis of the General and Annual Conferences.

III. Sources of the History of the Christmas Conference.

Historical inquiry into the character and proceedings of the Christmas Conference must be based primarily upon contemporaneous, or approximately contemporaneous, sources. These sources are divisible into two classes, Public and Private. The Public embrace two or, at most, three records. In the Public Contemporaneous Sources, the first place must be assigned to the "Minutes" or "Discipline," of the Christmas Conference (*i. e.*, "Minutes" . . . "Composing a Form of Discipline"[1]), put to the press, as we have seen, by Thomas Coke, one of the presidents of the Conference, at Philadelphia, between January 8 and January 19, 1785, immediately upon the adjournment of the Conference.[2] This document, being of official and strictly contemporaneous character, is the highest historical evidence we have of the nature and transactions of the Christmas Conference. With it must be considered the Sunday Service compiled by Mr. Wesley and brought over by Dr. Coke. The second place must be given to the earliest volume of what we now call the General Minutes, whose preface bears date, May, 1794, and which was published in 1795. It embraces the proceedings of all the Conferences held from 1773 to 1794, including the Christmas Conference. To these may be added the earliest Disciplines, especially the series of annual Disciplines following that of the Christmas Conference, six in number, from 1786 to 1791 inclusive, and the first Discipline which had quadrennial force, unrevisable by annual Conferences, ordained by the General Conference of 1792. In so far as these Disciplines contain references to the Christmas Conference, or other data from

[1] Title-page of the first Discipline, 1785.

[2] See the preceding chapter, p. 95.

which its character may be gathered or concluded, they of course possess very high value as historical evidence, both because of their official character and because men who participated in the proceedings of the Christmas Conference were also members of the annual Conferences, and of the General Conference of 1792, which ordained these Disciplines.

In the Private Contemporaneous Sources are to be included the writings of persons who were participants in, or eyewitnesses of, the proceedings of the Christmas Conference. These writings are treated in general as contemporary sources because they are, as noted, the work of eyewitnesses and participants. Their dates of publication are later, and vary considerably. Notice of these variations will be taken, and so far as they affect the value of evidence on particular points, due consideration will be given them in the proper connection. So far as our researches have revealed, the following persons, participants in the proceedings of the Christmas Conference, have put to record more or less formal accounts of the doings of the body: Francis Asbury (Journal); Thomas Coke (Journal and Ordination Sermon); Freeborn Garrettson (Journal; Articles in *Methodist Quarterly Review*, July, 1830; and notices in Bangs's Life of Garrettson); James O'Kelly (Apology and Vindication of Apology, both answered by Snethen); William Phœbus (An Essay on the Doctrine and Order of the Evangelical Church of America, as Constituted at Baltimore in 1784; and Memoirs of Bishop Whatcoat); Thomas Ware (Autobiography, and Article on the Christmas Conference in the *Methodist Quarterly Review*, for January, 1832); William Watters (A Short Account of the Christian Experience and Ministerial Labors of William Watters, Drawn up by Himself); Richard Whatcoat (extracts and notices in the Memoirs by Phœbus noted above). To these may be added the Funeral Discourse of Ezekiel Cooper preached on the death of Asbury, for while Cooper was not a member of the Christmas Conference, he was present at Barratt's Chapel when the steps were taken for calling it, and thus he becomes a first-hand source for that portion of the history of the body.

Jesse Lee occupies a unique position, and his History has a value all its own. He failed to get Garrettson's call to attend the Christmas Conference in time, and so was not present. But his History evinces on every page the most painstaking care to

procure, and the most literal exactness in the use of, all available sources of information concerning the history of the Church. As a contemporary historian of this character, therefore, he stands apart from all later historians; and we think we but voice the conviction of every careful student of his pages in declaring that his record is entitled to the highest respect and confidence, and ought to be recognized among the sources.

Let us now undertake a formal enumeration of these Public and Private Contemporaneous Sources of the History of the Christmas Conference. Such a catalogue has not before been undertaken. In a piece of pioneer work of this sort, we must crave the reader's indulgence. At best, though based upon the studies of a good many years, it is only a first draft, to be completed or, if necessary, corrected as opportunity may offer. It has not been possible to visit any of the historical libraries of Methodism: our sole dependence has been upon our own private collection of sources and authorities for Methodist history (which, perhaps, will compare not unfavorably with others) together with several volumes very kindly placed at our disposal by friends.

Our catalogue of sources, with appended remarks, is as follows:

I.

Public Contemporary Sources.

1. Minutes of Several Conversations between The Rev. Thomas Coke, LL.D. The Rev. Francis Asbury and others, at a Conference, begun in Baltimore, in the State of Maryland, on Monday, the 27*th.* of December, in the year 1784. Composing a Form of Discipline for the Ministers, Preachers and other Members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America. Philadelphia: Printed by Charles Cist, in Arch-Street, the Corner of Fourth-Street. M,DCC,LXXXV.

This First Discipline, though quite rare, is not so scarce as that of 1787 (known to exist in only two copies), or, probably, that of 1788, which is very difficult to secure. The title-page above is taken directly from the original. It consists of an unbroken series of eighty-one questions and answers. It is bound up with the Sunday Service compiled by Mr. Wesley, and brought over in sheets by Dr. Coke, whose title-page reads as follows:

The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America. With other Occasional Services. London: Printed in the year MDCCLXXXIV.

The contents of this Sunday Service, as indicated by separate headings, after the tables of proper lessons, are as follows:

(1) The Order for Morning Prayer Every Lord's Day. (Pp. 7–14.)

(2) The Order for Evening Prayer Every Lord's Day. (Pp. 14–19.)

(3) The Litany. (Pp. 20–26.)

(4) A Prayer and Thanksgiving to be used every Lord's Day. (Pp. 26, 27.)

(5) The Collects, Epistles, and Gospels, To be used throughout the year. (Pp. 27–124.)

(6) The Order for the Administration of the Lord's Supper. (Pp. 125–139.)

(7) The Ministration of Baptism of Infants. (Pp. 139–143.)

(8) The Ministration of Baptism to such as are of Riper Years. (Pp. 143–149.)

(9) The Form of Solemnization of Matrimony. (Pp. 149–155.)

(10) The Communion of the Sick. (Pp. 155, 156.)

(11) The Order for the Burial of the Dead. (Pp. 156–161.)

(12) Select Psalms. (Pp. 162–279.)

(13) The Form and Manner of Making and Ordaining of Superintendants, Elders, and Deacons. (Pp. 280–305.)

(a) The Form and Manner of Making of Deacons.

(b) The Form and Manner of Ordaining of Elders.

(c) The Form of Ordaining of a Superintendant.

(14) Articles of Religion (twenty-four in number). (Pp. 306–314.)

These titles are all verbally exact, being taken directly from the book itself. The preface is signed by John Wesley and dated Bristol, September 9, 1784. Bound up with the "Minutes" and the "Sunday Service" is also "A Collection of Psalms and Hymns," whose contents do not here concern us.

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2. Minutes of the Methodist Conferences, annually held in America, From 1773 to 1794, inclusive. Philadelphia: Printed

by Henry Tuckniss, No. 25 Church-Alley, and sold by *John Dickins*, No. 44, North Second Street, near Arch Street. M DCC XCV.

The preface of these "Minutes" bears date "Botetourt, May 24th, 1794." In Asbury's Journal, under date of May 21, 1794, we find this entry: "Came to M—— on Mill-Creek, in Botetourt's county, where I was met by brother I. E. who assisted me next day in preparing the minutes."[1] As John Dickins, the first book agent, was the publisher, so doubtless Bishop Asbury was the editor, of this first volume of collected Minutes. We know that it was he that edited the Discipline of 1787, arranging it "under proper heads" and methodizing it "in a more acceptable and easy manner."[2] And scarcely any other person would have assumed the responsibility of eliminating from the Minutes of the Conferences of 1777 and 1779 the questions pertaining to the ordinances and the threatened schism, which we are able to supply from Gatch's manuscript Journal as published by Dr. L. M. Lee.

That the volume was a compilation, partly of printed, and partly of manuscript, documents is also evident from the preface, where an objection to the purchase of the new volume is anticipated and answered: "It may be objected (as it has been by some on similar occasions) that 'many of these minutes have been already printed, and we have to purchase the same books twice';" to which the second answer is, "Although many of our yearly minutes have been printed, yet many others have not, and those that are published being in small pamphlets are more liable to be lost, and we have found only one person in whose hands a complete collection of the said minutes was to be found."[3]

But for the exactness and completeness of Jesse Lee, this would be about all we should know about this interesting and important volume. In particular we should be unable to tell which of the annual minutes had been previously printed in pamphlet form, and which had been preserved only in manuscript. But at the close of his account of the twelfth Conference, which met in the spring of 1784—the last Conference be-

[1] Journal, ii. 192.

[2] Journal, Nov. 27, 1785, and April 5, 1786; Title-page Discipline of 1787.

[3] Preface, pp. iii, iv.

fore the meeting of the Christmas Conference—Lee carefully adds this *Note:*

> Here end the minutes that were formerly taken and kept in manuscript, and not printed until 1795. After this all our annual minutes were printed every year. In the following part of this history the printed minutes will be attended to as they came out year after year.[1]

In connection with his account of the Conferences immediately following the Christmas Conference, in the spring of 1785, Mr. Lee again says: "And for the first time we had the annual minutes printed; which practice we have followed ever since."[2] Thus when Asbury and Dickins, in 1794, as editor and publisher, undertook the issue of the first volume of collected General Minutes, they had before them the manuscript minutes of the Conferences from 1773 to the spring of 1784 inclusive, and the annual pamphlet minutes of the Conferences from the spring of 1785 to 1794 inclusive. They may have had also the manuscript records of these last Conferences; but it is of importance to notice, as will appear in the sequel, that printed annual minutes had been issued during these years.

"The business of the three Conferences [held in April, May, and June, 1785]," says Mr. Lee, "was all arranged in the minutes as if it had all been done at one time and place—"[3] and that time and place were "Baltimore, January, 1785," according to the caption in the Minutes.[4] But here Mr. Lee's statement varies from the record of 1795, for the minute business of the Christmas Conference, which is thus made, though inexactly, to give date to the other three, is recorded in answer to questions which record also the business done at the three Conferences of 1785, without in any way distinguishing what business was done at each of these four Conferences. To this extent the business of four Conferences, including the Christmas Conference, was amalgamated, and all treated as annual Conferences of 1785 in the minutes which contain the only official record of the ordinations of the Christmas Conference.

The only fact that gives the Minutes of 1785, as printed in the General Minutes of 1795, less historical value than those "Min-

[1] Short History of the Methodists, p. 89.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 118.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 118.
[4] P. 75.

utes" of the Christmas Conference, "composing a Form of Discipline" which, as we have seen above, Coke printed immediately on the adjournment of the Conference, is that we cannot be certain that the reprint of 1795 is an exact reproduction of the original pamphlet minutes of 1785: in particular we cannot by certain evidence carry the introductory note, giving a brief account of the Christmas Conference and the organization of the Church, higher than 1795. For our own part we should be very glad to date this note 1785, and, without due consideration, we once so assumed.[1] We have some knowledge of the editorial liberties which Asbury allowed himself in the compilation of this volume; there is one appended footnote which could not have been written in 1785; the word "bishop" is used as an alternative for "superintendent," though it occurs nowhere in Wesley's ordination office contained in his Sunday Service, and was not introduced into the Discipline until 1787, when it excited some comment, until confirmed by the Conference; and the tenor and tenses of the few lines devoted to the organization seem to indicate a subsequent record. None of these considerations demonstrate that this note could not have been written in 1785; but taken together they seem to throw considerable doubt on that date, and as our earliest printed copy bears date of 1795, when all the annual minutes from the beginning to that date were collected and edited by Asbury, we cannot, by indubitable evidence, carry the introductory note higher than this. The most important verification of the existing records of the Christmas Conference that can well be anticipated from the disclosures of the future is the possible discovery of the original pamphlet minutes of 1785, by which our copy of 1795 may be either confirmed or corrected.

These considerations do not apply fully to the titles under which the minutes of 1785, 1786, and 1787, were republished in 1795. Jesse Lee, referring to the pamphlets of annual minutes to which he had promised to pay particular attention, says:[2] "This year [1785], and the two succeeding years, the minutes were

[1] See Constitutional History, footnote, p. 197.

[2] Short History, p. 118. Singularly overlooking these words of Lee's, though we had occasion to consult the page on which they occur in the preparation of the article, we fell into the error of denying a higher date than 1795 for these titles, in our paper in THE METHODIST REVIEW for July, 1895, p. 389. This error is now corrected above.

called, 'Minutes of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America.'" Turning to the General Minutes of 1795, we find the full title for 1785 in that volume to be, "Minutes of some Conversations between the Ministers and Preachers of the Methodist Episcopal Church, at a General Conference held at Baltimore, January 1785."[1] Without turning aside now to discuss the significance of this variation from Lee, we simply note here that titles identical with Lee's were employed for the Conferences of 1786 and 1787, the proceedings of the former appearing under the caption, "Minutes of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church for the year 1786,"[2] and of the latter under that of "Minutes of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, for the year 1787."[3]

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3. In the third place we class as Public Contemporary Sources the annual Disciplines from 1786 to 1791 inclusive, and the first quadrennial Discipline of 1792.[4] We append the exact and full titles of these volumes, taking all from the title-pages of the books themselves, including the original of the Discipline of 1787, where the agreement of all three of the reprints may also be noted.

1786. The General Minutes of the Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America, forming the Constitution of the said Church.

These "General Minutes" fill pp. 322–355 of a volume usually known as the second edition of the Sunday Service. There is no distinct title-page for the "Minutes" constituting the Discipline, or "forming the Constitution" of the Church; the title cited above is simply a general heading at the top of page 322. The title-page of the Sunday Service which includes this Discipline is as follows:

The Sunday Service of the Methodists In the United-States of America. With other Occasional Services. London: Printed

[1] Minutes of the Methodist Conferences, annually held in America, From 1773 to 1794, inclusive: 1795, p. 75.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 85.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 95.

[4] We do not mean to exclude later Disciplines from proper consideration; but this seems the right limit for this catalogue.

by Frys and Couchman, Worship-Street Upper-Moorfields, 1786.

1787. A Form of Discipline, for the Ministers, Preachers, and Members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America. Considered and approved at a Conference Held at Baltimore, in the State of Maryland, On Monday the 27th of December, 1784: in which The Reverend Thomas Coke, L.L.D. and the Reverend Francis Asbury, presided. Arranged under proper Heads, and methodized in a more acceptable and easy Manner. New-York: Printed by W. Ross, in Broad-Street. M. DCC. LXXXVII.[1]

1788. A Form of Discipline, for the Ministers, Preachers, and Members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America. Considered and approved at a Conference Held at Baltimore, in the State of Maryland, On Monday the 27th of December, 1784: in which The Reverend Thomas Coke, L.L.D. and the Reverend Francis Asbury, presided. Arranged under proper Heads, and methodized in a more acceptable and easy Manner. With some other useful Pieces annexed. Elizabeth-Town: Printed by Shepard Kollock. M. DCC. LXXXVIII.

The "useful pieces annexed" are the General Rules (nineteenth edition, signed by Coke and Asbury, and dated May 28, 1787), the Articles of Religion, and An Address to the Friends and Annual Subscribers to the support of Cokesbury-College, all three with separate title-pages, with publisher and date as given above. This Discipline contains also two other "pieces": "The Scripture Doctrine of Predestination, Election, and Reprobation" (with a separate title-page), and "Serious Thoughts on the Infallible, Unconditional, Perseverance of all that have once experienced Faith in Christ."[2]

1789. A Form of Discipline, for the Ministers, Preachers, and Members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America, Considered and Approved at a Conference Held at Baltimore, in the State of Maryland On Monday the 27th of December, 1784: in which Thomas Coke, and Francis Asbury, Presided:

[1] For an account of this "arranging" and "methodizing" see Tigert's Constitutional History, pp. 239–241.

[2] These "useful pieces," in this and the following Disciplines, are omitted from the reprints.

Arranged under proper Heads, and methodized in a more acceptable and easy Manner: With some other useful Pieces annexed. The Fifth Edition. New-York: Printed by William Ross, in Broad-Street. M. DCC. LXXXIX.

The "useful pieces annexed" are the Articles of Religion, and the Scripture Doctrine of Predestination, etc., with separate title-pages, publisher and date as given above, and, with distinct headings but no title-pages, "Serious Thoughts," etc., and "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection, as believed and taught by the Rev. Mr. John Wesley, From the year 1725, to the year 1765."

1790. A Form of Discipline for the Ministers, Preachers and Members (now comprehending the Principles and Doctrines) of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America, considered and approved at a Conference Held at Baltimore, in the State of Maryland On Monday the 27th of December, 1784: In which Thomas Coke, and Francis Asbury, Presided: Arranged under proper Heads, and methodized in a more acceptable and easy manner. The Sixth Edition. Philadelphia: Printed by R. Aitken & Son, No. 22. Market Street and sold by John Dickins, No. 43. Fourth Street. M. DCC. XC.

The principal new feature of this title-page—"now comprehending the Principles and Doctrines"—marks the transformation of the "useful pieces annexed" into sections of the Discipline itself: Section XXXV. is the Articles of Religion; Section XXXVI. Scripture Doctrine of Predestination, etc.; Section XXXVII. Serious Thoughts, etc.; Section XXXVIII. A Plain Account of Christian Perfection; and Section XXXIX. An Extract on the Nature and Subjects of Christian Baptism: this last Section has a separate title-page.

1791. A Form of Discipline, for the Ministers, Preachers, and Members (now comprehending the Principles and Doctrines) of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America, considered and approved at a Conference Held at Baltimore, in the State of Maryland, on Monday, the 27th of December, 1784: in which Thomas Coke, and Francis Asbury, Presided: Arranged under proper Heads, and methodized in a more acceptable and easy Manner. The Seventh Edition. Philadelphia: Printed by Joseph Crukshank, No. 91, High-street; and sold

by John Dickins, No. 43, Fourth-street, near the corner Race-street. MDCCXCI.

In this Discipline the General Rules constitute Section XXXV.; the Articles of Religion, Section XXXVI.; the Scripture Doctrine of Predestination, etc., Section XXXVII.; the Serious Thoughts, etc., Section XXXVIII.; the Plain Account of Christian Perfection, Section XXXIX.; and An Extract on the Nature and Subjects of Christian Baptism, Section XL.—the same doctrinal sections being continued, as in the Discipline of 1790.

1792. The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America, revised and approved at the General Conference Held at Baltimore, in the State of Maryland, in November, 1792: in which Thomas Coke, and Francis Asbury, Presided: Arranged under proper Heads, and methodized in a more acceptable and easy Manner. The Eighth Edition. Philadelphia: Printed by Parry Hall, No. 149. Chesnut street, and sold by John Dickins, No. 182. Race street, between fifth and sixth street. M.DCC.XCII.

Here for the first time the title "Doctrines and Discipline," and the approval by a body styled "the General Conference," meet us. From the evolution of the title and of the book itself, as noticed in the preceding pages, it is very evident that whatever may be meant by the phrase, "present existing and established standards of doctrine" in the Restrictive Rule of 1808,[1] the word "Doctrines" when it first appeared on the title-page of the Discipline referred to the doctrinal sections incorporated in the book itself. Thus in the Discipline of 1792 the Articles of Religion are brought forward to the position of Chapter I., Section II.; Chapter III., Section IV. is "Of Christian Perfection"; Section V. "Against Antinomianism"; Section VI. "Scripture Doctrine of Predestination," etc.; Section VII. "Serious Thoughts on the infallible, unconditional Perseverance," etc.; Section VIII. "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection," etc.; and Section IX. "An Extract on the Nature and Subjects of Christian Baptism." Section X. is headed "Sacramental Services," etc., and contains the offices for the admin-

[1] Discipline of 1808, p. 15.

istration of the sacraments, for the ordination of deacons, elders, and bishops, for the solemnization of matrimony, and for the burial of the dead. Thus three Disciplines, 1790, 1791, and 1792, completely incorporated sections on doctrine in their contents, and this fact was acknowledged on their title-pages. But this is not the connection in which to pursue further the implications of these facts.

II.

Private Contemporary Sources.

We may now rapidly survey the Private Contemporary Sources, arranging them, for convenience of consultation, in alphabetical order, but indicating, as far as possible, the dates of publication.

1. *Francis Asbury.*

The Journal of the Rev. Francis Asbury, Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, from August 7, 1771, to December 7, 1815. In Three Volumes. Vol. I, from August 7, 1771, to July 4, 1786. Vol. II, from July 15, 1786, to November 6, 1800. Vol. III, from November 8, 1800, to December 7, 1815. New-York: Published by N. Bangs and T. Mason, for the Methodist Episcopal Church. Abraham Paul, Printer, 182 Water-Street. 1821.

The earliest printed Journal of Bishop Asbury which we have been able to discover is contained in Volume I. of the *Arminian Magazine*, published in Philadelphia, in 1789. In the May number, pp. 184–198, is published "The Journal of Francis Asbury, Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, from August 7th, 1771, to February 27, 1772." No further installment is given in this volume; but in Volume II., for 1790, the publication of the Journal is resumed, under the same title given above, and with a formal note, "To the Reader," prefixed. The issues for February, pp. 85–90; for March, pp. 141–146; for April, pp. 193–199; for May, pp. 245–251; for June, pp. 297–302; for July, pp. 349–354; for August, pp. 401–407; for September, pp. 453–458, all for the year 1790, contain together the Journal "From March 26, 1772, to April 14, 1773." At the close of the installment for September, 1790, the notice is appended, "To be continued in Vol. III." We have not instituted a comparison between the

Journal of 1821 and the installments thus published in 1789 and 1790. It will be noticed that they begin at the same date, and in quoting it is desirable to verify the later by the earlier record.

In addition to the note, "To the Reader," published in February, 1790, referred to above, the volume for 1790 contains at the beginning an address "To the Subscribers for the *Arminian Magazine*," with this signature: "*Signed in behalf of the Council*, FRANCIS ASBURY." The Council was at that time, it will be remembered, the organ of the general government of the Church, and had charge of the publishing interests; but it was expressly provided that "In the intervals of the Council, the bishop shall have power to act in all contingent occurrences relative to the printing business."[1] A similar address (though differing, since the "former volume" is referred to in the second) must have been prefixed to the first volume, for the date of the address in the volume for 1790 is "Baltimore, Dec. 8, 1789," which must have been carried over from the first volume, from the copy of which before us the title-page and address are missing. As the address refers to the whole contents of the volume, it seems to imply that Asbury sustained an editorial relation to the *Arminian Magazine*, similar to Mr. Wesley's position in England. We quote one sentence of his allusion to his own Journal:

> As no other satisfactory account can be procured, this journal will be the more acceptable to many, as it contains a brief relation of the progress of Methodism, step by step, through the Continent of America.[2]

Of the general scope of the *Magazine* itself, Asbury says:

> It is worthy of observation that, in time, this Magazine may form a complete American library; as most of our publications will be included therein. Unbound tracts are soon damaged or lost: but here all is secured in good binding. And this Magazine may serve the next generation.[3]

The full title of the second volume of this *Magazine* is as follows:

> The Arminian Magazine: Consisting of Extracts and Original Treatises on General Redemption. Volume II. For the Year 1790. Printed in Philadelphia, by Prichard & Hall, in Mar-

[1] See Tigert's Constitutional History, p. 246, citation from Lee.

[2] *Arminian Magazine*, Philadelphia, Vol. II., page iii, 1790.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. iv.

ket Street, and sold by John Dickins, in Fourth Street (East side) near the corner of Race Street. M. DCC. XC.

Between these publications in the *Arminian Magazine* and the issue of the edition of 1821 (since often reprinted), an attempt was made to issue the Journal. "The Preface which Mr. Asbury prefixed to the first number of the second volume of his Journal, which was printed during his lifetime," is reproduced in Vol. I. of the edition of 1821. In it he says:

> The first volume of the extract of my journal was published, many years after it was written, under the management of others, it being out of my power to attend the press, or even to read over the copy before it was printed: several inconveniences attending that volume will be avoided in this [the second volume of that edition].
>
> For many years I did not determine to publish a second volume of the extract of my journal: but the advice of my friends, and the prospects of my approaching dissolution, have determined me on its publication.[1]

Appended footnotes to this passage inform us that the first volume of that edition, "now reprinted" in the edition of 1821, "was corrected by the author"; and that the "determination" to publish a second volume of the former edition "was not carried into effect, except one small number, which is now republished with the corrections of the author."

Where this corrected printed material ends, and where the sole manuscript matter begins, in the edition of 1821, we have a clew for determining, in the fact that Francis Hollingsworth, the "transcriber" of the Journal published in 1821, in giving assurance that "the work is the author's" (Asbury's), adds: "I must be understood to mean from the year 1780 to the end of the journal; the original manuscript of all that preceded that date I never saw: I only know that when printed it did not please the author." It may be concluded, therefore, that the printed portion of the Journal contained in the earlier edition,[2] corrected by Asbury, extended from 1771 to 1780. We are further told by Hollingsworth that "he presumes he has been enough observant of this [Bishop Asbury's style] to satisfy most readers, inasmuch as the bishop himself, when he examined what had been transcribed up to 1807, altered but once, and then not much."[3]

[1] Journal, ed. 1821, I. pp. iii, iv.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. vii.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. vii, *cf.* footnote on p. v.

On Thursday, July 1, 1815, Asbury makes the following entry in his Journal:

> We came to son Francis Hollingsworth's, Little-York. My kind countrywoman gave me up her own room. . . . I sit seven hours a day, looking over and hearing read my transcribed journal; we have examined and approved up to 1807. As a record of the early history of Methodism, my journal will be of use; and accompanied by the minutes of the Conferences, will tell all that will be necessary to know. I have buried in shades all that will be proper to forget, in which I am personally concerned; if truth and I have been wronged, we have both witnessed our day of triumph.[1]

Thus, in the edition of 1821, we have Asbury's Journal as revised and approved by himself down to the year 1807; while from 1807 to December 7, 1815, the date of the last entry, we have Hollingsworth's transcription of Asbury's manuscript. Bishop Asbury died March 21, 1816.

[1] Journal, ed. 1821, iii. 382.

THOMAS COKE,
Foreign Minister of Methodism.

CHAPTER XI.

The Genesis of the General and Annual Conferences.

III. Sources of the History of the Christmas Conference (Continued).

We continue the alphabetical catalogue of the Private Contemporary Sources of the History of the Christmas Conference begun in the last chapter.

2. *Thomas Coke.*

The Journal of Thomas Coke, Bishop of the Methodist-Episcopal Church, From September 18th, 1784, to June 3, 1785.

Under the title given above, the Journal of Bishop Coke, covering minutely the entire period of his first visit to America, from the date of his sailing from England to that of his departure from America, is published in the *Arminian Magazine*, Philadelphia, for May, June, July, and August, 1789: May, pp. 237–244; June, pp. 286–297; July, pp. 339–346; and August, pp. 391–398. Like the "Minutes" or "Discipline" of 1785 and Asbury's Journal, Coke's Journal is a strictly contemporaneous source for the history of the Christmas Conference, embracing Coke's account of the calling of the Conference, of the work of the body, of the ordinations of Bishop Asbury and of the first American Methodist deacons and elders, and of the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church. This entire Journal was republished in The Methodist Review for September-October, 1896, pp. 3–32, the editor taking the utmost care "to secure exact conformity to the original; this conformity extending to all italicized words, spelling, punctuation, and most of the typographical peculiarities." It has also been reprinted as a separate pamphlet, which may be procured of the editor, with the following title-page:

The Journal of Thomas Coke, Bishop of the Methodist Episco-

pal Church, From September 18, 1784, to June 3, 1785. Reprinted from the *Arminian Magazine*, Philadelphia, for May, June, July, and August, 1789. Carefully conformed to the original under the Editorial Supervision of Jno. J. Tigert, Book Editor, Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Nashville, Tenn.: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Barbee and Smith, Agents. 1896.

In addition to the foregoing, there was published in London, in 1793, a volume entitled, "Extracts of the Journals of the Rev. Dr. Coke's Five Visits to America." It will be noticed that this volume on its face purports to be no more than "Extracts." So far as we are aware no material discrepancies have been brought to light as to statements of fact between the portion of this volume which covers the period of Dr. Coke's first visit to America and the complete Journal of that visit as originally published in the American *Arminian Magazine* for 1789. There are, however, additions, omissions, and alterations of language, such as, for the most part, are naturally accounted for as justifiable or necessary editorial adaptations of "Extracts" intended for a new audience beyond seas reading this portion of the Journal nine years after it was put to record and four years after its original publication. For example, in the *Arminian Magazine* for June, 1789, p. 293, it is said of the Church in New York in January following the Christmas Conference: "We expected this society would have made the greatest opposition to our plan, but on the contrary they have been the most forward to promote it. They have already put up a reading desk, and railed in a communion table," etc. Now this passage has been omitted from the volume of "Extracts." The motive is obvious. It would have been a grave imprudence and a useless particularity to have republished in England in 1793 that the New York Society had been suspected of disaffection in 1784—especially when the suspicions proved to be altogether groundless![1] Nevertheless, charges of a vague but sufficiently grave nature have been formulated or hinted from time to time by persons, outside and inside of Methodism, who, apparently inspired by hostile or destructive motives of one sort or another,

[1] A more important variation, often brought forward, is discussed in Tigert's Constitutional History, pp. 180, 181.

have sought to cast some shade of discredit upon what we believe to be the historically demonstrable facts of the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church by Coke and Asbury and their compeers of the Christmas Conference. These attacks have been continued to our day, and the modern have one unvarying characteristic in common with the earliest assaults: they make the same efforts at arraignment of the motives and character of the chief actors in these momentous transactions, basing their accusations upon insinuations and alleged proofs of insincerity, vanity, ambition, and double dealing, and hardly stopping short of the impeachment of the veracity and integrity of the first bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church. This is a question about which we have had something to say elsewhere, and of which we may have more to say hereafter, but into which we cannot enter here. In the matter of the two editions of Coke's Journal, and their variations, a few general remarks may be here recorded: (1) The London edition of 1793 never professed to be complete: on its face it purported to be an abbreviation; (2) Its changes could not have been intended to deceive Mr. Wesley, for at the date of its publication Mr. Wesley had been in his grave two years—a rather material fact, which some of Coke's maligners, in their ignorance or disregard of chronology, seem to have overlooked; (3) Vague charges intended to affect Coke's sincerity or veracity, or his value as a witness, so far as they do not fall of their own weight, are to be set at rest by a detailed comparison throughout of the variant passages in the texts of the two editions, a work which we have not had the opportunity to do, and which, so far as we know, has never been systematically and exhaustively performed: when done, as it ought to be, we believe it will constitute a final historical vindication of Coke's record; (4) There is nowhere any hint of any editing done on the original American edition of Coke's Journal published in the *Arminian Magazine* in 1789: as an original unmutilated contemporaneous record, standing in date of publication within five years of the events it describes, and appearing four years before the London edition of "Extracts," it must be regarded, in any event, as the primary and most valuable witness.

In addition to his Journal, published as noticed above, Dr. Coke printed at Baltimore, between February 26 and March 6,

1785, "the substance of a sermon," "preached at the ordination of brother Asbury to the office of a bishop." It consists of two parts, (1) "A vindication of our conduct"; and (2) "The characteristics of a Christian bishop."[1] When copies of this sermon, preached before an American audience, on occasion of the ordination of the first Protestant bishop on American soil, and at the organization of the first American Episcopal Church, reached England, a passage arraigning the English Episcopal Establishment gave great umbrage, especially to Charles Wesley, who is understood to have been the author of certain anonymous strictures upon it; but when he wrote his brother John challenging his attention to Dr. Coke's "ordination sermon" (Sept. 8, 1785), John deliberately replied (Sept. 13, 1785), "I believe Dr. Coke is as free from ambition as from covetousness. He has done nothing rashly that I know," thus putting the final stamp of his approval on the acts of his American ambassador.[2]

3. *Freeborn Garrettson.*

There seem to be three separate publications from the pen of Garrettson himself: (1) An autobiography entitled "Experience and Travels," published in Philadelphia in 1791; (2) His Journal, possibly issued later as a separate volume, but first published in the *Arminian Magazine* (English) for 1794;[3] (3) Garrettson's "Semi-Centennial Sermon," published in 1826. Utterances of Mr. Garrettson's are also cited in two papers in the *Methodist Magazine and Quarterly Review* for July, 1830, one entitled "A Reply to Mr. Alexander McCaine," pp. 325–341, and the other a review of Bangs's "Life of the Rev. Freeborn Gar-

[1] *Arminian Magazine*, Philadelphia, June, 1789, p. 294.

[2] The expression in the sermon which gave chief offense in England was as follows: "The Church of England, of which the Society of Methodists in general have till lately professed themselves a part, did for many years groan in America under grievances of the heaviest kind. Subjected to a hierarchy, which weighs everything in the scale of politics, its most important interests were repeatedly sacrificed to the supposed advantages of England."

[3] It was expected that two volumes, both ascribed to Garrettson, would be in hand before this volume went to press, but they have been delayed. One correspondent refers to the volume in his possession as an autobiography, the other as a journal. As Bangs, in the preface to his Life of Garrettson, calls Garrettson's "account of his experience and travels" a journal, it is probable that these volumes are identical.

rettson," pp. 341–360. To these sources must be added: "The Life of the Rev. Freeborn Garrettson: Compiled from his Printed and Manuscript Journals, and other Authentic Documents. By Nathan Bangs, D.D."

4. *James O'Kelly.*

This great schismatic, ordained elder at the Christmas Conference, published two pamphlets, both replied to by Nicholas Snethen, which are freely quoted in the histories and biographies under the title of O'Kelly's *Apology* and *Vindication of Apology.* O'Kelly's first pamphlet was signed "Christicola," and its full title was "The Author's Apology for Protesting against the Methodist Episcopal Government." Its style imitated that of the Book of Chronicles. Snethen promptly issued "A Reply to an Apology," to which O'Kelly made answer in "A Vindication of an Apology," to which Snethen in turn replied with "An Answer to James O'Kelly's Vindication of his Apology." Jesse Lee also prepared a manuscript reply to O'Kelly which Dr. L. M. Lee inserts in his Life of Jesse Lee, pp. 278–282.

5. *William Phoebus.*

Dr. Phoebus gave to the Church two publications of considerable value for the history of the Christmas Conference. The full title-page of the first is as follows:

An Essay on the Doctrine and Order of the Evangelical Church of America; as Constituted at Baltimore in 1784, Under the Patronage of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M., Rev. Thomas Coke, LL.D., Rev. W. F. Oterbine, D.D., Principal of the German Reformed Collegiate Church in America, Rev. F. Asbury, V.D.M., Rev. Martin Boehm, a Bishop of the Menonists, Two Presbyters from the British Conference, and Sixty Itinerant Preachers, Raised in the United States. By William Phoebus, M.D., one of said itinerant preachers. New York: Printed for the Author, by Abraham Paul, 182 Water Street. 1817.

Phoebus's other and perhaps more important publication is the "Memoirs of the Rev. Richard Whatcoat; late Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church," New York, 1828.

6. *Thomas Ware.*

The Rev. Thomas Ware has also left two publications, as follows:

Sketches of the Life and Travels of Rev. Thomas Ware, who has been an Itinerant Methodist Preacher for more than Fifty Years. Written by Himself. Revised by the Editors. New York: Published by G. Lane and P. P. Sandford, For the Methodist Episcopal Church, At the Conference Office, 200 Mulberry Street. J. Collord, Printer. 1842.

So reads the title-page of our copy, but the copyright is dated 1839, and the preface is signed "T. W. Salem, N. J., March 28, 1839."

In the *Methodist Magazine and Quarterly Review* for January, 1832, pp. 96–104, Mr. Ware also contributed a valuable article entitled, "The Christmas Conference of 1784."[1]

7. *William Watters.*

This first American itinerant published a volume entitled:

A Short Account of the Christian Experience and Ministerial Labors of William Watters. Drawn up by Himself. Alexandria;—Printed by S. Snowden.

The title-page bears no date, but the preface is dated, "Fairfax, May 14, 1806."

8. *Richard Whatcoat.*

If the Journal of Bishop Whatcoat has been separately published, we have seen no notice of it; but it is freely used in the Memoirs by Phoebus noticed above. There is one Life of Whatcoat, which contains original materials (*e. g.*, a copy of John Wesley's certificate of Whatcoat's ordination to the eldership, pp. 43, 44), entitled:

The Life of Rev. Richard Whatcoat, one of the Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church. By Benjamin St. James Fry. Edited by Daniel P. Kidder. New York: Published by Lane & Scott, For the Sunday-school Union of the Methodist

[1] There is also a letter of Ware's, December, 1828, published in *Defense of Truth*, Baltimore, 1829, and quoted by some of the historians and biographers.

Episcopal Church, 200 Mulberry Street. Joseph Longking, Printer. 1852.

In our preliminary sketch, contained in the last chapter, it was said that Ezekiel Cooper and Jesse Lee, though not members of the Christmas Conference, were, for reasons assigned, entitled to be recognized among the primitive sources for the history of the Conference. With a copy of the title-pages of their works, this somewhat hurried catalogue of the Private Contemporary Sources of the History of the Christmas Conference will accordingly close.

9. *Ezekiel Cooper.*

The Substance of a Funeral Discourse, Delivered at the Request of the Annual Conference, on Tuesday, the 23d of April, 1816, in St. George's Church, Philadelphia: on the Death of the Rev. Francis Asbury, Superintendent, or Senior Bishop, of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Now Enlarged. By Ezekiel Cooper, Presbyter of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Philadelphia: Published by Jonathan Pounder, No. 134, North 4th street, opposite St. George's Church. 1819.

10. *Jesse Lee.*

A Short History of the Methodists, In the United States of America; Beginning in 1766, and Continued till 1809. To Which is Prefixed a Brief Account of Their Rise in England, in the Year 1729, etc. By Jesse Lee, Author of Lee's Life, and Chaplain to Congress. Baltimore, Printed by Magill and Clime, Book Sellers, 224 Baltimore Street. 1810.

Postscript.—Since the preceding was put in type, one of the volumes ascribed to Garrettson has been received. The title is: "The Experience and Travels of Mr. Freeborn Garrettson, Minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church in North-America. Philadelphia: Printed by Joseph Crukshank, No. 91, High Street, and Sold by John Dickins, No. 182, in Race Street, near Sixth Street. M.DCC.XCI." The Journal, published in the English *Arminian Magazine*, 1794, is almost certainly a reprint of the "Experience and Travels." A third work is attributed to Phoebus (Myles, Chronological History, ed. 1813, p. 164) entitled, "An Apology for the Right of Ordination, in the Evangelical Church of America, called Methodists," published in 1804. Myles quotes extensively from it, and has been much followed.

CHAPTER XII.

The Genesis of the General and Annual Conferences.

IV. The Historical Development.

So far in our attempt at an objective and historical account of the Christmas Conference, we have considered (1) its origin; (2) its organization, membership, and minutes; and (3) the sources for its history. Recognizing the results of these primary inquiries—which exact students will do well to review in this connection—as solid historical ground beneath our feet, we are now prepared (4) to undertake a similar investigation of the character and enactments of the Christmas Conference so far as they affect or determine our present theme, namely, the genesis of the General and Annual Conferences of Episcopal Methodism.

The Christmas Conference lodged the government of the Church which it had just organized in a body designated simply "the Conference"; and on the title-page of its own Minutes, published by one of its presidents immediately on its adjournment, was itself designated with equal simplicity "a Conference." A body so designated had been the only governing assembly known in English or American Methodism up to this time. The Christmas Conference organized "an Episcopal Church under the direction of Superintendents, Elders, Deacons, and Helpers" (Ques. 3). But "no person shall be ordained a Superintendent, Elder, or Deacon, *without the consent of a majority of the Conference*" (Ques. 26, italics ours); the Superintendent is amenable for his conduct "to the Conference: who have power to expel him for improper conduct, if they see it necessary" (Ques. 27); and if a superintendent "ceases from traveling without the consent of the Conference, he shall not thereafter exercise any ministerial function whatsoever in our Church" (Ques. 28). Moreover, if elders or deacons cease

from traveling, "unless they have the permission of the Conference declared under the hand of a Superintendent, they are on no account to exercise any of the peculiar functions of those offices among us" (Ques. 35). These quotations will suffice to show that "the Conference," in which the Christmas assembly lodged the government of the Church, had supreme and final electoral and disciplinary authority over all the officers and agents, great and small—superintendents, elders, or deacons—who administered the affairs of the newly organized Methodist Episcopal Church.

The legislative authority of "the Conference" was equal to its electoral and disciplinary powers. There was no other body to legislate. It is true that there is no explicit deposit or definition of legislative powers confided to "the Conference" to be found in the proceedings of the Christmas Conference. For this very reason the Christmas Conference, though an *organizing* convention, since it created the Methodist Episcopal Church, was not a *constitutional* convention, since it extended no unrepealable enactments of its own over the authority of the supreme governmental body which it constituted. The legislative activity of "the Conference," though exercised at great inconvenience and with some degree of irregularity, owing to circumstances not necessary now to be considered, is witnessed by the issue of annual Disciplines from 1786 to 1791, inclusive; or, from the adjournment of the Christmas Conference—which in its full consciousness of its organizing function and of its coming together under the extraordinary call of the preachers at Barratt's, has left no trace that it even dreamed of perpetuating its own powers, or of the appointment of a "General Conference" as its "successor"—to the meeting of the General Conference of 1792, which met, not by virtue of any act or authority of the Christmas Conference, but on the call of "the Conference" (or Conferences, since "the Conference" was then meeting in several sections) to which the organizing convention had committed the government of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

All of these six Disciplines from 1786 to 1791 (all of them, including 1787, in the original) lie before us. It would be interesting but tedious to trace through them all the legislation of "the Conference" in the yearly meetings. We shall have to be content with two or three summary and typical examples.

At the first sessions of the three sections in which "the Conference"—still so designated in the Discipline of 1786, in all the passages corresponding to those quoted above from the first Discipline—met in 1785 the enactments of the Christmas Conference on the subject of slavery contained in Question 42, a very voluminous and precise piece of work, were repealed. Not only was Question 42 omitted, but Questions 23, 53, 63 (on the trial of preachers), and 64 were expunged, while some of the additions will possibly be found quite as significant as the omissions. Confining attention to the omission of Question 42, we cannot suppose that its omission was due to the exercise of any revisionary authority in England, where the Discipline of 1786 was published, for Dr. Coke expressly informs us (Journal, June 1, 1785) that "we thought it prudent to suspend the minute concerning slavery for one year." (So also Minutes, ed. 1795, p. 83.) This occurs in Coke's account of the final Conference session of the year held at Baltimore which, as we know from other sources, had authority to take final action. Again: in 1789 and 1790 Asbury carried through all the sessions of those years, with great difficulty and anxiety, the measures relative to the creation and empowering of the "Council"[1] as a central, though not supreme, organ of administration and government—a temporary expedient which did not long postpone the creation of the General Conference. Once more: the General Conference of 1792, which it is now beginning to be evident we shall be compelled to call the *first*, was called together by the authority of these same yearly assemblies,[2] which, as we have seen, also used their sovereign legislative powers in the creation of the Council and the definition of its powers.

Finally: we may take the testimony of Jesse Lee as to the nature and extent of the changes effected by legislation between the adjournment of the Christmas Conference and the assembling of the General Conference in 1792. Lee says:

> It was eight years from the Christmas conference, where we became a regular Church, to this general conference. In which time our form of discipline had been changed, and altered in so many particulars; and the business of the council had thrown the connection into such confusion, that we

[1] For 1789 see Lee's History, p. 149. The numerous references to Asbury's Journal which establish this for 1790 will be found conveniently summarized in Tigert's Constitutional History, pp. 248, 249.

[2] Minutes of 1792 (ed. 1795), p. 178.

thought proper at this conference to take under consideration the greater part of the form of Discipline, and either abolish, establish, or change the rules, so that we might all approve of, or be reconciled to, whatever might be found in the discipline.[1]

From this survey, it is now abundantly evident that the government of the Church from 1784 to 1792 was not by "General" Conferences at all. No suggestion of any such body occurs anywhere in the enactments of the Christmas Conference, and no hint that it took to itself any such character. The Christmas Conference differed from all General Conferences from 1792 to 1894 in this capital respect—decisive of its exclusion from the category of General Conferences, if no other reason existed—that its legislative enactments did not continue inviolate and inviolable until the meeting of a successor (so called), the General Conference of 1792. The facts of our history are, as will be shown in detail in the sequel, that General and Annual Conferences are complementary: each implies the other, and neither, in the sense of the Discipline, exists without the other. The body in which were lodged, and which actually exercised, the supreme governmental powers of the Methodist Episcopal Church—electoral, disciplinary, legislative—between 1785 and 1792 was neither a General nor an Annual Conference. It was a yearly assembly or assemblies which combined the functions of both. General and Annual Conferences, in the sense of the Discipline from 1792 to the present, had no existence prior to that date. The functions of the two—General and Annual—have been differentiated and defined out of the undivided powers of a primitive body known as "the Conference," recognized and set up—constituted if one please, since many powers necessary to its supremacy were added, previously unknown in American Methodism—by the Christmas Conference at the time and in the act of organizing the Church. This division and differentiation was brought about, partly by the progress of events and the urgent necessities of the growing Church between 1784 and 1792—much of which we have clearly traced in other pages—and partly by legislation which first took decisive form in 1792, as we shall presently see, and has been continued on the main lines then marked out to the present day. No such differentiation, division, and definition of powers is to be found anywhere

[1] Short History of the Methodists, pp. 192, 193.

in the law book of the Church—the Disciplines from 1784 to 1791 inclusive—until the Discipline of 1792 is reached. In the interval between 1784 and 1792 the yearly Conferences exercised freely all the powers afterwards confined to General Conferences, issuing a Discipline annually, engaging in the election of superintendents—as when the Conference of 1787 put its veto upon Wesley's nomination of Whatcoat and Garrettson to the superintendency—and directing all the officers and operations of the Church. Indeed, the Conference of 1787 exercised the highest conceivable act of sovereignty when it expunged from the Discipline the only enactment which could be regarded as a limitation upon its sovereignty which the Christmas Conference had placed in that book—namely, the resolution of submission to Mr. Wesley. The Christmas Conference made the elected superintendent amenable "to the Conference" (Question 27, cited above). The Minutes of 1795—back of which date we cannot with certainty carry the language, as we have previously seen—declare this officer "amenable to the body of ministers and preachers." So be it. "The body of ministers and preachers" is "the Conference"; and "the Conference" is "the body of ministers and preachers," organized not as a "General" Conference, not as an "Annual" Conference—these are terms of legal determination at a later date, which have no meaning or application here—but simply and only as "the Conference." Whether "the Conference," "the body of ministers and preachers," assembled in one place or many, was a mere accident in the legislative exercise of its sovereignty, which did not in any wise affect its character or validity, so a majority of "the body" was secured. The details of this period of our government will be presently considered so far as our space will allow, but must not now interrupt our study of the principles involved. To speak of the Christmas Conference as a General Conference—using the language in the sense of the Discipline from 1792 to the present, the only sense in which it has any legal significance—and thus inevitably to imply that the authority of its legislation extended unimpaired over the whole interval from 1784 to 1792, is to falsify the history of the Church in many particulars: (1) it ignores the series of annual Disciplines, with their multiplied changes, issued during this interval; (2) it implies that the Christmas Conference was an organ

in and for the government of the Church, which it never was, since government implies permanency, and the Christmas Conference—as appears from its call, its acts, and its dissolution—was an organ, not for government, but for organization; (3) it unhistorically cancels the government of the Church by yearly assemblies which had as full sovereignty as belonged to the General Conferences from 1792 to 1808 inclusive, and to the Christmas Conference itself, since the Conference of 1787 canceled the only enactment of the Christmas Conference which could be regarded as a prohibitory or constitutional limitation of its own sovereignty—the resolution (Question 2) of obedience to the commands of Mr. Wesley in matters of church government; (4) it fails to appreciate the complementary character and necessary coexistence of General and Annual Conferences, and gives no recognition to the decisive movement and moment in the history of the Church which brought both species of Conferences simultaneously into legal and disciplinary existence and definition in 1792.

These positions are simply historical, not controversial. They are susceptible of much more abundant corroboration than we have space to give them here.[1] The relative and decisive facts cannot be denied, nor their significance repudiated. The controversies of later years have absolutely no proper place in the construction of this history, which must be critically drawn directly and purely from the sources enumerated in preceding papers: to consider these controversies is a violent infringement of universally accepted canons of historical method and a certain index of more or less vicious results.

The truth of the foregoing conclusions may become further evident from a slightly variant angle of vision. The question, Was the Christmas Conference of 1784 a General Conference? is identical with the question, Is 1784 the date of the beginning of General Conference government in the Methodist Episcopal Church? For, if the Conference of 1784 was a General Conference—the first—it follows as the night the day that the General Conference of 1792—the second—was its successor. And if

[1] The writer indulges the hope that he may soon command the leisure to incorporate these fuller expositions in a completely revised edition of his Constitutional History, fully sustaining the main positions of that work, originally worked out from the sources then accessible.

1792 was the successor of 1784, then the legislative—nay, the sovereign—authority of the Conference of 1784 covered the intervening period until the meeting of its successor as a sovereign in 1792, and was directly transmitted, whole and entire, to that sovereign successor, without fracture, change, or diminution, by any intervening sovereign; just as the authority of 1792 covered the intervening period and was so transmitted to 1796, and so in general throughout the series of intervals between General Conferences. The annual Disciplines from 1785 to 1792 and other sources tell plainly the story of the electoral and legislative acts of that other sovereign—the yearly Conferences, completely adequate to the government of the Church without the aid of a General Conference. If it be said that the yearly Conferences governed by virtue of a charter conferred by the Christmas Conference, so that the sovereignty of the Conference of 1784 really extended to the meeting of its successor as a sovereign, the General Conference of 1792, the answer is, in general, that such a doctrine clothes the Christmas Conference with the powers of a *constitutional* convention—a position which we repudiate as utterly unhistorical—and, in particular, that every element of such an alleged charter was alterable by the chartered body, which entirely deprives the legislation of the Christmas Conference of the nature or force of a charter or constitution; and, finally, that the yearly Conference of 1787 repealed the only act of the Christmas Conference that could be construed as a constitutional limitation on the sovereignty of "the Conference"—namely, the resolution that "during the life of the Rev. Mr. Wesley, we acknowledge ourselves his sons in the gospel, *ready in matters belonging to church-government to obey his commands.*" (Italics ours.) The question is not as to the full powers of the Christmas Conference during the period of its session—which, so far as we know, has never been disputed—but as to the extension of its enactments over the period until the meeting of its alleged successor. On the first point, the powers of the Christmas Conference were as great and unlimited as the powers of the General Conferences from 1792 to 1808; though the truth of history requires us to add the very material statement that in this respect the yearly Conferences from 1785 to 1791 were the peers of the Christmas Conference and of the succeeding General Conferences. Thus, on the second point, it is un-

deniable that the Christmas Conference differed *in toto* from all General Conferences. Hence, it appears once more that it was not a General Conference, for the simple reason that the period from 1785 to 1792 was a period of the government of the Church, not by the Christmas Conference, but by the yearly assemblies. Neither by those who called it, nor by those who composed it, was the Christmas Conference designed as an organ of government. It was called together simply and only as an organizing body. As a mass meeting designed to include all the American itinerants, who had been meeting in Conference since 1773, its powers were in the nature of the case unlimited. But all these powers expired with its adjournment—which was indeed its dissolution—since it committed the whole government of the Church, without charter or constitution, to the body described as "the Conference." So far are we from occupying the position ascribed to Mr. Choate,[1] that the Christmas Conference was a *constitutional* convention, constructing an organization, or system of government, which the General Conferences could not alter or modify, that in our view a leading and de-

[1] I say "ascribed," relying upon the accuracy of the quotations made in a recently published volume, which it was my editorial duty to read both in MS. and in proof. For, though I have had for many years several copies of the work known as "The Methodist Church Property Case" in my possession, I have not as yet, for reasons assigned in the text, felt it my duty to read it. The reasonings of litigants in courts of law are not used by historians for the construction of history of more than half a century before; on the contrary, that history, drawn objectively and uncontroversially from its proper contemporary sources, is to be brought forward as the only final and competent judge to determine the merits of controversies whether in courts or elsewhere. I shall not at present read Mr. Choate's speech, unless a further examination of criticisms of my views in the volume referred to should oblige me to do so. I desire to add that I have purposely avoided reading controversial matter on the Christmas Conference, except such as has necessarily come under my eye editorially, having no intention of engaging in controversy which might even unconsciously affect my historical work, and believing that I had at my command better sources for the positive construction of history, which has been my only aim. The positions in the Constitutional History were worked out without reference to differences of opinion which I now know to exist, and were taken and published before they were developed. After going over again and again the historical foundations upon which the main conclusions of that book rest, I stand by them; though I trust that a new edition may soon afford me opportunity to correct errors of detail which my further studies have revealed.

cisive reason for denying to the Christmas Conference the title of a General Conference is that its enactments were freely modified by the yearly Conferences. So far was its sovereignty from being constitutionally projected over General Conferences and the entire Church until 1844 and the present day, that the true state of the case is that its authority was not so much as projected over the yearly Conferences of 1785 to 1791 until the meeting of its so-called successor. And here for the present may be dismissed this aspect of the case.

We are now in a position to inquire on what grounds, and in what sense, the Christmas Conference may properly be described as a convention; though it called itself neither a convention nor a General Conference, one of its presidents, on publishing its Minutes, styling it simply "a Conference," which continued to be its designation on the title-page of the Disciplines down to 1792, when, for the first time in the history of the Church, its law book bore on its face the notice that it was "revised and approved" by a body styled "the General Conference," whose functions, likewise for the first time, were defined and described in the law book itself. We trust that we do not lack the breadth and the fairness to appreciate the position of those who are able to reach a short, simple, and easy solution of this problem. The Christmas Conference exercised the supreme powers of, and was identical in membership with, the General Conference of 1792, and, though there were some subsequent limitations of membership, this equality practically continues through all the General Conferences down to 1808. Moreover, it is not unusual to designate the General Conferences from 1792 to 1808 as conventions, or as General Conferences with "conventional" powers, since there was no limitation upon the authority of these bodies. In particular, the General Conference of 1808, which created the delegated General Conference, issued its charter of perpetuity to the episcopacy as against alteration or abolition by the delegated body, and ordained the "constitution," is often called a "convention." Bishop Soule, the author of the constitution, so designated it in a speech before the General Conference of 1844. There were, it is argued, five of these conventions, with powers as great as those of the Christmas Conference, and it is mere strife about words whether we call the Christmas Conference a convention with General Conference powers,

or the Conferences of 1792–1808 General Conferences with conventional powers. These six bodies were thus identical in their supreme powers, and the difference between the Conference of 1784 and the other five is the difference between *tweedledum* and *tweedledee*. Such seems to be the inevitable conclusion, and we do not wonder that this short and easy solution by its very simplicity commends itself to the minds of many as summing up the essentials of the problem and ending the questions at issue. But the factors which enter into the reconstruction of an historical picture, or the revivification of an historical past, are often very complex, and more careful inquirers might regard this simplicity, not as raising a presumption of truth, but, contrariwise, as suggesting a suspicion of omission or error. If the problem is so simple, it is difficult to see how any difference of view could have arisen.

Let us indulge a preliminary examination of this simple solution. The first thing that must strike even a casual observer is that the Conference of 1784 in this series of six is an isolated phenomenon. The five General Conferences of 1792–1808 are bound together in a continuous governmental structure from which the Conference of 1784 is excluded. The legal links of unbroken sovereignty which stretch from any one of these five to its successor, and bind them all in one organic whole, do not stretch from 1784 to 1792, and thus include the Christmas Conference in that organized whole of settled and unbroken General Conference supremacy or sovereignty. It is not that the period from 1784 to 1792 is eight years instead of four. The term "Quadrennial," so far as it carries only a notion of time, exclusive of that of permanency and succession, is a mere accident of the situation. If the Christmas Conference had governed the Church from 1784 to 1792, as the General Conference of 1792 governed it from 1792 to 1796, there might be small question as to its admission to the category of General Conferences. But an isolated General Conference is a contradiction in terms.

Thus we are brought around in sight of the fact that while the generalization upon which the "simple solution" is founded is the truth, it is only half the truth, omitting a very essential element. It is undoubted that all six of the Conferences under consideration were sovereigns, but between the first and second there stretched a line of eight other sovereigns, just as

royal as the Christmas Conference before them and as the five General Conferences after them. In 1792 this other sovereign became extinct, and obtruded no royal reversals and vetoes upon the Quadrennial sovereigns from 1792 to 1808. Let us here remind ourselves that it was not that yearly Conferences ruled in a limited, even if necessarily inconvenient, fashion from 1784 to 1792; but that, as we have seen, the Christmas Conference committed to "the Conference" the government of the Church; that "the Conference" repeatedly annulled the acts of the Christmas Conference; that in 1787 it abrogated the resolution of submission to Mr. Wesley, and rejected his nominees for the superintendency, thus asserting the autonomy of the American Methodist Episcopal Church; that in 1789 and 1790 it created and empowered the "Council" as a central organ of general administration and government; and that in 1792 it called the General Conference of 1792 together, thus superseding and abolishing the Council, which had proved a failure as an organ of administration. For, says Snethen, "the instant a General Conference was acceded to, the Council was superseded."

We may now recall the results of our examination into the *anterior* connections—the origin—of the Christmas Conference, since its *posterior* connections with the government of the Church are sufficiently evident. But these results will best pass under review in connection with a formal enumeration and presentation of the *grounds* on which the Christmas Conference may properly be styled a *convention*—with or without the prefix "extraordinary," which certainly has an eminently fit descriptive use in this connection, and is not wholly devoid of legal or governmental significance. These grounds are four, of which the third is chief and might be sufficient without the others:

(1) Its call—extraordinary, if one please;

(2) Its self-derived and self-sufficient powers, as an intended mass meeting of "all the traveling preachers on the continent";

(3) Its creation of the Methodist Episcopal Church;

(4) Its dissolution when this creative work was done.

1. *The Extraordinary Call.*—The reader will kindly review in this connection the results of our inquiries in Chapter VIII. Fortunately the state of the evidence is such as to enable us to mark the precise moments of the conception and birth of the

Christmas Conference. This positive evidence of the origin of the body, establishing a definite beginning and history, of itself excludes mere theories and hypotheses for which proof *ad rem* is lacking. We know that when Dr. Coke arrived in New York, Mr. Dickins, so far from receiving the impression from the doctor's communications that Mr. Wesley designed the meeting of a Conference to pass on his plan, pressed Coke "earnestly to make it public, because, as he most justly argued, Mr. Wesley had determined the point." We know that at Philadelphia Dr. Coke did open "to the society our new plan of church-government." We know that in his circular letter Mr. Wesley decisively and definitively said, "I have accordingly appointed Dr. Coke and Mr. Francis Asbury to be joint Superintendents over our brethren in North America." We know that when this appointment was communicated to Asbury, who was then holding the office of general assistant by Conference election, with Mr. Wesley's confirmation thereof, his "answer then was, if the preachers unanimously choose me, I shall not act in the capacity I have hitherto done by Mr. Wesley's appointment," declining office on the terms tendered. We know that Asbury had, in expectation of Dr. Coke and his embassy, "called together [at Barratt's] a considerable number of the preachers to form a council," and had informed Mr. Wesley's delegate that "*if they* [the aforesaid preachers] *were of opinion that it would be expedient immediately to call a conference, it should be done.*" (Italics ours.) We know that these preachers, about fifteen in number, "were accordingly called, and, after debate, were unanimously of opinion that it would be best immediately to call a conference of all the traveling preachers on the continent," and that the topic before these preachers when they made this call was "the design of *organizing* the Methodists into an Independent Episcopal Church." (Italics ours.)

This is the positive, precise, essentially complete account of the actual historical inception of the Christmas Conference, derived exclusively from the absolutely contemporary witness of Dr. Coke and Mr. Asbury. There is nowhere a trace of evidence that the idea of the meeting of such a body had entered any human brain before it took shape in that of Asbury. To assert for it any other origin in the face of such evidence is impossible without disregard of the simplest canons of historical testimony.

Undoubtedly Mr. Wesley gave the acts of the Christmas Conference his full and free approval when the Minutes of the body were laid before him by Dr. Coke on his return to London in the following year. So far as his concurrence and indorsement were necessary to the finality and legitimacy of the enactments of the Christmas Conference, the body had them to the fullest extent, and any supposititious shadow of illegitimacy regarded as attaching to the birth of American Methodism is entirely removed thereby. This was an easy matter for Mr. Wesley, since the Christmas Conference followed his directions as to the ordinations, etc. But Mr. Wesley's unqualified indorsement *after the event* is quite a different thing from his positive inclusion *before the event*, of the Conference as a part of his plan for the organization or government of the Church. No pertinent evidence of this positive inclusion, so far as we know, has ever been adduced, nor, so far as our reading extends in the proper quarters for its discovery if it exists, is adducible. Indeed, the positive evidence we have of the actual call of the body seems once for all to exclude the possibility of evidence tracing the body to another and distinct origin.

It has been attempted to find evidence of Mr. Wesley's provision for the Christmas Conference in the concluding sentences of his circular letter. In order to carry the origination of the body back from Mr. Asbury and the preachers at Barratt's to Mr. Wesley, however, not only is it necessary to set aside the direct and conclusive evidence already adduced—which a mere conjecture or presumption would not warrant us in doing—but, considering the circular letter alone, we should have to show, not simply that the action at Barratt's and at Baltimore was not in contradiction of the circular letter, but that it was deducible from it. Logicians are familiar with the distinction between a proposition which is deducible from another, and a proposition which, while it does not contradict, cannot be inferred from another.[1] Now we have no interest in denying that the action at Barratt's and Baltimore did not contradict Mr. Wesley's letter, since he fully approved what was done immediately afterwards; but it is certain that the action taken by the Council at Barratt's was not suggested by, and is not deducible from, Mr. Wesley's letter.

[1] Compare a problem set in Tigert's Logic, p. 190.

Let us analyze the letter. When properly printed it is composed of six numbered paragraphs. Its general topic, it will become evident, is a defense of Mr. Wesley's course in ordaining a superintendent and elders for America. The contents of the paragraphs may be summarized as follows:

(1) The providential separation of the provinces of North America from the civil and ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the mother-country is pointed out, and Mr. Wesley's willingness to give desired advice in this peculiar situation indicated;

(2) Mr. Wesley's long-cherished conviction that bishops and presbyters have the same right to ordain is stated; and his refusal hitherto to exercise his right in England explained by his determination not to violate the established order of the national Church;

(3) The difference between England and North America is pointed out: since in America there are no bishops having jurisdiction, and there is scant provision for the administration of the sacraments, Mr. Wesley declares his scruples at an end, and conceives himself at full liberty to ordain for this field;

(4) He accordingly prepares and advises the use of a liturgy and appoints Dr. Coke and Mr. Asbury to be joint superintendents, and Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey to act as elders; so far as appears, these appointments being definitive—Coke, Whatcoat, and Vasey having been ordained and furnished with parchments;

(5) Mr. Wesley expresses his willingness to embrace any more rational and scriptural way, if pointed out, of providing pastors for these poor sheep of the wilderness; and

(6) It seems to him in conclusion that a way has been suggested which some might consider more regular and rational, and he proceeds to give his reasons why he did not adopt it (we quote the paragraph in full):

(6) It has indeed been proposed, to desire the English Bishops, to ordain part of our preachers for *America*. But to this I object, 1. I desired the Bishop of *London*, to ordain only one; but could not prevail: 2. If they consented, we know the slowness of their proceedings; but the matter admits of no delay. 3. If they would ordain them *now*, they would likewise expect to govern them. And how grievously would this intangle us? 4. As our *American* brethren are now totally disentangled both from the State, and from the English Hierarchy, we dare not intangle them again, either with the one or the other. They are now at full liberty, simply to follow the

scriptures and the primitive church. And we judge it best that they should stand fast in that liberty, wherewith God has so strangely made them free.[1]

It is clearly evident that the theme of this letter from beginning to end is the justification of the ordinations for America, and the clear and rightful separation of the American Methodists from the English Establishment, since they were no longer subjects of the English state. This was the liberty wherewith God had so strangely made them free, and wherein they were to stand fast. In particular, the sixth paragraph states four reasons for declining to ask ordination of the English bishops for the American preachers, and the last two sentences are part of that paragraph and of the fourth reason.[2] We reach therefore our former conclusion, in Chapter VIII., that it is impossible to deduce authority for the Christmas Conference from the circular letter, and that all that can be said is that the letter contains no prohibition from Mr. Wesley of such a gathering. We are not sure, however, but that we have been logically too liberal in allowing that while authority for the Christmas Conference is not deducible from the circular letter, the action at Baltimore is not contradictory of that document. For to say of two propositions even that they are not contradictory is to imply that they have the same matter; but in this case there is no connection between the subject of the circular letter—the American ordinations—and the organization of a Conference—General or other—for the government of the American Church. There is simply no point of contact or relation between the circular letter and the Christmas Conference.

We have elsewhere said that Mr. Asbury interposed the Conference as a barrier between himself and the authority of Mr. Wesley. That he did this, and that he did it without wicked rebellion, and without the desire or intention of prostituting power for personal ends, but with wise and far-sighted states-

[1] This version is taken literally, following spelling, punctuation, capitalization, italics, from a printed copy of the circular letter inserted in an original and complete copy of the Sunday Service and Discipline of 1784, as issued by Dr. Coke in 1785.

[2] In the Minutes of 1813, and in the letter as often printed, there is a dash after the period following the word "other," separating the last two sentences as if they were a general conclusion to the letter. But this punctuation is incorrect: it occurs neither in the Minutes of 1795, nor in the printed copy inserted in the original Discipline of 1784, from which I have quoted.

manship, ought to be evident, and is abundantly evident, from the utterances of Mr. Asbury himself. As we have seen, he was "shocked" when informed of the intentions of Coke, Whatcoat, and Vasey in coming to America. His answer then was a point-blank refusal to act as joint superintendent by Mr. Wesley's appointment. The unanimous choice of the preachers could alone induce Asbury to accept office, and this independence of his led immediately and necessarily to the calling of the Conference. Again: of the passage of the minute of submission to Mr. Wesley at the Conference itself, he declared in 1796: "I never approved of that binding minute. I did not think it practical expediency to obey Mr. Wesley, at three thousand miles distance, in all matters relative to church government." But Mr. Wesley did think it "practical expediency," and just here the issue was joined between him and Mr. Asbury, who adds the oft-quoted words with regard to the binding minute, "I was mute and modest when it passed, and I was mute when it was expunged." One final utterance of Mr. Asbury's will put in a clear light why he refused office on Mr. Wesley's appointment; why he demanded unanimous election by the preachers, that he might interpose their authority between himself and the great man over the sea; why he was mute and modest at the passage and at the repeal of the minute of submission. In his letter to the Rev. Joseph Benson in 1816, a few months before his (Asbury's) death, Mr. Asbury says:

> I can truly say for one, that the greatest affliction and sorrow of my life was that our dear father [Mr. Wesley], from the time of the Revolution to his death, grew more and more jealous of myself and the whole American Connection; that it appeared we had lost his confidence almost entirely. But he rigidly contended for a special and independent right of governing the chief minister or ministers of our order, which, in our judgment, went not only to put him out of office, but to remove him from the Continent to elsewhere, that our father saw fit; and that, notwithstanding our constitution and the right of electing every Church-officer, and more especially our Superintendent, yet we are told, "Not till after the death of Mr. Wesley" our constitution could have its full operation. For many years before this time we lived in peace, and trusted in the confidence and friendship of each other. But after the Revolution, we were called upon to give a printed obligation, which here follows, and which could not be dispensed with—it must be: "During the life of the Rev. Mr. Wesley, we acknowledge ourselves his sons in the gospel; ready, in matters belonging to Church-government, to obey his commands; and we do engage, after his death, to do every thing that we judge consistent with the cause of religion in America

and the political interest of the States, to preserve and promote our union with the Methodists in Europe."

Thus we conclude that because the Christmas Conference was a called body, unexpectedly intercalated between the regular sessions of the American Conference for 1784 and 1785; because it was not part of Mr. Wesley's "plan" for the organization or government of the Church; because it was not called by Dr. Coke or Mr. Asbury, or both of them together, acting independently and officially; because it was called by a Council of preachers, brought together by Asbury to "form a council" at Barratt's Chapel, Delaware, November 14, 1784, Asbury initiating and Coke concurring—this Council "after debate" being unanimously of opinion that it would be best immediately to call a "conference of all the traveling preachers on the continent"; because the purpose of calling the Conference was to have it pass on "the design of organizing the Methodists into an Independent Episcopal Church," *i. e.*, to take action on "Mr. Wesley's plan," involving a decision particularly upon the appointment and ordination of superintendents—the Conference deciding whether Mr. Wesley's appointment and ordination of Dr. Coke was complete and final in itself, or whether it needed their consent and confirmation before he could act as a joint superintendent among them, and Mr. Asbury refusing ordination as Mr. Wesley's appointee without the unanimous election of the preachers; because of all these circumstances of its origin and call—its extraordinary call—differentiating it from any General Conference that ever met, we say the Christmas Conference is properly called a convention—an "extraordinary" convention, if one prefers it.

2. *It is properly called a convention because it was a self-created body, with self-derived and self-sufficient authority.* This point need not long detain us. The authority of the Christmas Conference did not flow to it from Mr. Wesley, from the American Conference, from Dr. Coke or Mr. Asbury, or both of them, nor from the Council at Barratt's, nor from any constituency of laity behind it. It was a mass meeting of all the American itinerants, *i. e.*, of all those who had exercised the functions of government or legislation over the Methodist Societies of the continent, who freely met on the call of some of their own number, specially convened as a Council, Mr. Asbury initiating and

Dr. Coke approving. Of course it did not derive its powers from this Council, a lesser body than itself, though it assembled on the call of the preachers who had come together at the Quarterly Meeting at Barratt's. As a mass convention intended to embrace all the itinerants, its powers were self-derived and self-sufficient.

The self-derivation and self-sufficiency of the powers of the self-created body are evident, also, from the nature of the case, as well as from the circumstances of its historical origin with which we are now so familiar. The American preachers assembled "to constitute themselves into an Episcopal Church"; the change suggested by Mr. Wesley "could not take effect until adopted by us," says William Watters, who was present, "which was done in a deliberate, formal manner, at a conference called for that purpose"; they were, as distinct from Mr. Wesley, to satisfy themselves of the validity of Dr. Coke's episcopal ordination, and confirm or reject it, although the act, so far as Mr. Wesley was concerned, was complete and final; in particular, the preachers were called upon to give Mr. Asbury a "unanimous election" to the joint superintendency, as a *conditio sine qua non* of his ordination, he flatly refusing to accept ordination from Dr. Coke by Mr. Wesley's sole appointment. Now, such a body, self-created and appealed to, with these ends in view, recognized by Mr. Asbury as giving him a title to office which Mr. Wesley could not give, and affording him protection in office against Mr. Wesley himself, was necessarily a coördinate, independent, and self-sufficient source of power. For these reasons, in the second place, the Christmas Conference is properly called a convention.

3. *In the third place, the Christmas Conference is properly called a convention*—an organizing convention—*because it created the Methodist Episcopal Church.* In an unshared and unique sense, the Christmas Conference, thus called and constituted, created the Methodist Episcopal Church. When the Conference met, this Church did not exist: when it adjourned, episcopacy and the other orders of the ministry, sacraments, liturgy, and Discipline, had all been secured and provided. It thus stands exterior to the Church as an instrument of organization, and not within it as an organ of government. Neither those who called it, nor those who composed it, designed it as an organ of gov-

ernment. Now, a General Conference, whether of the original, unlimited order, or of the subsequent restricted and delegated class, is the creature of the Church. The Methodist Episcopal Church in due time called into existence such a body, unknown in the previous history of Methodism, for its own government, to meet the new conditions and exigencies of ecclesiastical regimen in America. But since the Christmas Conference was the creator of the Methodist Episcopal Church, it could not have been its creature. By this token we are directed at once to its extraordinary and unique character as an organizing convention: to designate such an organizing or creative body a convention is a correct use of language. It differs from every General Conference in this capital respect: Every General Conference is the creature of the Church; but the Church is the creature of the Christmas Conference.

Turning once more to the Minutes of the Christmas Conference, as the primary official and contemporaneous source, the outstanding and overshadowing fact, contained in this record, subordinating or absorbing all others, is that the body transformed the Methodist Societies in America into the Methodist Episcopal Church.[1] Asbury, for obvious reasons, is careful to record that in the Christmas Conference the debates were free, and all things were determined by a majority of votes.[2] "We will form ourselves into an Episcopal Church," say the members of the Christmas Conference, in the third answer of their official Minutes, "under the direction of Superintendents, Elders, Deacons, and Helpers, according to the Forms of Ordination

[1] I have before me a copy of the Large Minutes of 1780, entitled, "Minutes of Several Conversations between the Reverend Mr. John and Charles Wesley, and Others. From the Year 1744, to the Year 1780. London: Printed by J. Paramore, at the Foundry, Moorfields." As far as I can ascertain, this was the last edition of the Large Minutes published before the organization of American Methodism into a Church. If so, it is the document used by Coke and Asbury as the basis of their preparation of the Discipline adopted by the Christmas Conference. Dr. Robert Emory, in his History of the Discipline, starts off on the wrong foot, inasmuch as he compares the first Discipline with the Large Minutes of 1789, printed in 1791, which seems to have been his only copy. Lack of space forbids a detailed comparison in the text above; but I hope to publish an exact comparison between the original of the first Discipline and the Large Minutes of 1780, that our governmental history may be placed upon the proper foundation.

[2] Journal, i. 376.

annexed to our Liturgy, and the Form of Discipline set forth in these Minutes." This answer (1) enumerates the grades of the ministry of the new Church; (2) specifies its already printed forms of ordination; (3) refers to its printed Liturgy, whose contents have already been accurately enumerated in these pages; and (4) styles "these Minutes" a "Form of Discipline." This primary official and contemporaneous record, let it be noted, though supported by all the other sources, stands in its own sufficiency, decisive of what was done. "Following the counsel of Mr. John Wesley," say the Minutes published in 1795, "who recommended the Episcopal mode of church government, we thought it best to become an Episcopal Church," etc. Thus the orders and sacraments provided by Mr. Wesley were freely accepted by the Christmas Conference; the election of one of the joint superintentendents appointed and already ordained by Wesley (Dr. Coke), and the election and ordination of the other joint superintendent appointed by Wesley (Mr. Asbury), with that of elders and deacons, followed; and the first American "Episcopal Church" was organized, and began its almost unparalleled mission of continental conquest.

The exact method of this organization deserves notice. In the American Societies there already existed two marks of a Christian Church, (1) congregations of faithful men, and (2) the preaching of the pure word of God. Mr. Wesley designed to add the other two, (3) orders, or an ordained ministry; and (4) the sacraments instituted by our Lord, thus completing the organization of a Christian Church. But the bearers of these orders and sacraments from Mr. Wesley were not accepted without the consent of the Christmas Conference, called for this purpose. The Americans, however, were in this situation. By the final rejection of the Fluvanna action—proceeding to the extent of the reordination of Fluvanna men—the American Methodists had set aside self-originated presbyterial ordination once for all. However rational and scriptural the Fluvanna method, followed in principle by the British Conference in 1836, appears to us, it had been aborted and suppressed by the American preachers. While the Christmas Conference, therefore, passed upon the validity of Mr. Wesley's ordinations, and elected Dr. Coke and Mr. Asbury to the joint superintendency, the Americans, according to their own history and principles,

were shut up to the acceptance of the orders and sacraments provided by Mr. Wesley—else they must continue without both. If the question is asked, Did our episcopacy—or ministerial orders generally—originate with Mr. Wesley or with the Christmas Conference? the answer is, With both. Neither, in the event, exercised power without the other. Wesley did appoint both the joint superintendents, and ordain and commission one, doubtless regarding his action as complete. But Mr. Asbury and the Americans thought otherwise. Mr. Asbury refused appointment and ordination without the election of the preachers, and this led to Dr. Coke's election as well as his own, the Conference independently confirming Mr. Wesley's acts. On the other hand, the Conference freely elected, but had it declined Mr. Wesley's provision, the Americans, according to their own principles, would have remained without orders and sacraments. The elected superintendents were, of course, made amenable to the Conference.

4. *The Christmas Conference is properly styled a convention, and not a General Conference, because when it adjourned it dissolved.* This point need not be elaborated. An isolated General Conference, as we have seen, is an impossible conception in Methodist Church government. The General Conference of 1792 was in no sense the successor of the Christmas Conference. The organizing convention committed the supreme government of the Church to "the Conference," which exercised sovereignty until it called the General Conference into existence in 1792. When the Christmas Conference adjourned it ceased to exist.

Let us sum up:

1. The Christmas Conference was not a convention in the sense of being composed of delegates of the people called Methodists expressly chosen for constitutional purposes, whose action could not, therefore, be revised by "the Conference," in its yearly meetings, or by the General Conference. The notion of the actual, representative, or constructive presence or action of the laity, as distinct from their pastors, in the Christmas Conference, or in the Council of preachers that called it, is pure fiction, apparently devised more than half a century later for controversial purposes. From Dr. Coke's Journal we know that the laity were present in hundreds at Barratt's Chapel—he administered the Lord's Supper, he says, to five or six hundred

communicants; yet none of these were called into the Council to consult about the calling of the Christmas Conference, nor were they or any other laymen invited to seats in that body. There were no delegates or representatives of the laity: the membership of the Societies did not act in such manner at the organization of the Church that a purely clerical body could not undo the work of the Conference: in fact, the laity did not act at all, though content with what was done, and purely clerical bodies did immediately begin the revision of the work done in 1784. Such functions of the laity were entirely foreign to the conceptions of Church government entertained by the fathers of 1784; this unhistorical idea would perhaps never have been suggested except that long afterwards it was needed as a proof to sustain a failing cause that had little else upon which to lean.[1]

2. The Christmas Conference was not a convention in the sense of making a constitution and lodging it in the government of the Church as a charter and definition of the powers to be exercised by a legislature. No such constitutional convention assembled in American Methodism until 1808. Yet it would be very easy to construct a verbal argument proving the Christmas Conference a constitutional convention. Asbury, in the letter to Benson of 1816 as cited above, refers to "our constitution," enacted in 1784; and the title of the Discipline of 1786 is, "The General Minutes of the Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America, *forming the Constitution of the said Church.*" (Italics ours.) But such verbal arguments are very deceptive, and will lead us astray unless we pass to the realities that lie behind them. The term "constitution," employed in these citations, does not designate any unrevisable legislation of the Christmas Conference, expressly set apart and

[1] The first "Constitution and Discipline of the Methodist Protestant Church" (Baltimore: 1830; Preface, p. v.) gives unequivocal witness on this point: "At the close of the year 1784, the methodist societies in these United States, were organized by a conference of preachers exclusively, into what is called the Methodist Episcopal Church. . . . The government was so framed by the conference, as to secure to the itinerant ministers, the unlimited exercise of the legislative, executive, and judicial powers of the church, to the entire exclusion of all other classes of ministers and all the people." This testimony in 1830 of seceders from the Methodist Episcopal Church sufficiently offsets the cunningly devised theory of a later controversy attributed to Mr. Choate.

recognized as such; but refers to the necessary permanency of the principles of Episcopal regimen which the American Methodists had incorporated in their ecclesiastical organization, which, while they could be legally eliminated, speaking from the standpoint of pure theory, could not, as a matter of fact, be canceled without repudiating the fundamental convictions and practically irrevocable deeds of Mr. Wesley and the American Methodists, and thus overturning all the foundations that had been laid.

3. The Christmas Conference was a convention in the senses specified and elaborated above: (1) In its call, and the extraordinary purposes and ends involved therein; (2) As an intended mass meeting of all the itinerants who had hitherto acted as legislators of the Church, convened to take action on Mr. Wesley's plan; (3) As creating the Church, by initiating and confirming its orders and sacraments, thus standing exterior to the Church, and not in it; and (4) As dissolving in its adjournment and constituting no General Conference successor, governmental sovereignty, with the exception of the "binding minute," being fully committed to the yearly assembly called "the Conference."

From the beginning, the historians of the Church have recognized the extraordinary and exceptional character of the Christmas Conference. Jesse Lee, earliest and most exact, says, indeed, of the Christmas Conference that it "was considered to be a general conference" [1]—a rather reticent and dubious expression from such an historian, to be considered in the light of what follows. The caption of Chapter V., in which this fuller expression occurs also, runs, "From the first general Conference in 1784," etc. But the caption of Chapter VII. is, "From the beginning of the year 1792, in which the first regular General Conferrence was held," etc. Of this Conference Lee says, "On the first day of November, 1792, the first regular general conference began in Baltimore" [2]—the text in no wise deviating from, or limiting, the caption, as in the case of Chapter V. For Chapter IX. the caption is, "From the beginning of the year 1796, including the second General Conference," etc., the adjective "regular" being omitted; and the body is mentioned several times in the text simply as the "general conference." The caption of Chapter X. is, "From the beginning of the year 1800, including the

[1] Short History, p. 94. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 176.

third General Conference," etc., and the corresponding text is, "This year we held our third regular general conference," etc.[1] The caption of Chapter XI. is, "From the beginning of the year 1804, including the fourth general conference," etc., and the corresponding text is, "This year we held our fourth general conference in Baltimore,"[2] etc. Finally, as to Lee's notation, he says of the General Conference of 1808, "The 219th [conference] was the 5th general conference, held in Baltimore, on the 6th of May."[3] The sum of the evidence derivable from Lee as to notation is this: (1) Once in a caption he speaks of 1784 as a "general conference," which is qualified in the text by the words "was considered to be," the historian withholding judgment; (2) twice, in 1792 and 1800, the body is spoken of as the "first regular" and the "third regular" General Conference; (3) three times, in 1796, 1804, and 1808, the bodies are spoken of absolutely as the second, fourth, and fifth General Conferences, this being apparently the final notation on which Lee settled.

If, in view of the whole evidence, we attempt to fix the sense of Lee's term "regular," we take first its ordinary lexical meaning, "conformed to a rule; agreeable to an established rule, law, principle, or type," and, since Lee wrote in 1809, after five Disciplinary General Conferences had been held, we find its specific interpretation in the fact that before 1792 the Discipline, the law book of the Church, did not distinguish between General and Annual Conferences, these bodies being defined and ordained by law at that date. That his employment of the term "regular" was in further contrast with the Conferences of 1785, 1786, and 1787, styled "General Conferences" in the Minutes, is highly probable, and will receive some consideration hereafter.

But there are other passages in which Lee would naturally have spoken of the Christmas Conference as the first General Conference had he so regarded it, but in which he distinguishes it, with more or less sharpness of contrast, from General Conferences. Thus he says: "I shall therefore take no further notice of the rules about slavery which were made at various times for twenty-four years, i. e. from the Christmas Conference in 1784, to the last general conference held in 1808."[4] Speaking of the

[1] Short History, p. 264. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 297. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 345. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 102.

college, he says, "The business was brought before the conference which met at Christmas," [1] etc. Alluding to Mr. Whatcoat's rejection as a bishop in 1787, he says: "Dr. Coke contended that we were obliged to receive Mr. Whatcoat, because we had said in the minutes taken at the Christmas conference, when we were first formed into a Church in 1784," [2] etc. "Mr. Tunnil was elected to the office of an elder at the Christmas conference, when we were first formed into a Church." [3] Finally: "It was eight years from the Christmas conference, where we became a regular church, to this general conference." [4] Not much weight is to be assigned these passages, except as they indicate Mr. Lee's general drift. It may be noted, however, that in the first and last passages the Christmas Conference is distinguished from General Conferences in the same sentence, and that in three the organizing function of the body is emphasized as its distinguishing note.

In conclusion, it is desirable to state explicitly some general prerogative facts, in the light of which the details of evidence are to be considered.

I. No Discipline from 1785 to 1791 inclusive contains the distinction between General and Annual Conferences in form or fact. We have already considered the answers in the Disciplines of 1785 and 1786, which assign supreme governmental authority to "the Conference." In the Disciplines of 1787, 1788, 1789, 1790, and 1791, "the Conference" continues the sovereign and exclusive organ of government. In every one of these Disciplines, now lying before us, "the electing and ordaining of Bishops, Elders, and Deacons" is "business to be done in the Conference." In the sections devoted to these orders of ministers, it is said of all, bishops, elders, and deacons, that they are to be constituted "by the election of a majority of the Conference," etc.; and bishops are amenable "to the Conference: who have the power to expel them for improper conduct, if they see it necessary." The mere statement of these simple facts cannot bring home to the consciousness of a reader the fullness and weight of knowledge and conviction that spring from the monotonous reiteration in all these connections of the sole and supreme governmental authority of the only organ of government recognized in the Disciplines of the Methodist Episcopal

[1] Short History, p. 113. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 126. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 162. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 192.

Church from its organization to 1792. As one picks up Discipline after Discipline, and examines its provisions in detail, he sees that here is a system of government, simple and original, differing widely from that which prevailed afterwards. Though, throughout this period, "the Conference" met in sections, varying from three in 1785 to sixteen in 1792, the Discipline of the Church never recognized any impairment of its unity or supremacy, and from beginning to end of the period the legally constituted organ of government in our Church was "the Conference."

II. The Discipline of 1792, for the first time in the history of American Methodism, substitutes for "the Conference" two bodies, "the General and District [Annual] Conferences." Never before in the history of the Church do we find such a division, distribution, and definition of governmental powers between these two orders of Conferences, which have continued in the Discipline and in the Church to this day. The act was of legal and disciplinary force and record in the strictest sense of the terms. The year 1792 must rank with 1784 and 1808 as of first-rate importance in the constitutional history of Episcopal Methodism. In 1792, for the first time in the law book of the Church, the question is asked, "Who shall compose the General Conference?" and its membership is defined—all the traveling preachers in full connection. For the first time a sovereign successor of the same order is constituted. "When and where shall the next General Conference be held?" is asked, and the answer recorded, "On the 1st day of November, in the year 1796, in the town of Baltimore." Similarly, for the first time in the Discipline and in the Church, the membership and sessions of what we now call Annual Conferences are legally determined. "Who are the members of the District [Annual] Conferences?" is asked, and the answer is, "All the traveling preachers of the District or Districts respectively, who are in full connection." "How often are the District Conferences to be held?" Answer: "Annually." For the first time in the history of the Church, the election of bishops is made the exclusive prerogative of "the General Conference"; and, likewise for the first time, these officers are made amenable to the newly-constituted tribunal, "the General Conference." Elders and deacons, hitherto, like the bishops, elected by "the Confer-

ence," are now to be constituted "by the election of a majority of the District Conference." And so in the Discipline of 1792, from which all of these citations and facts are directly gathered, we have the original legal constitution of General and Annual Conferences, with the Disciplinary division and definition of their powers. From 1792 the legislative function inheres exclusively in the General Conference. And the law book—the Discipline—now goes forth to the Church for the first time with the notice on its face that it was "revised and approved" by a body styled "the General Conference."

These decisive facts may suffice. On them, with the results of the preceding discussion, we rest the inevitable historical conclusions. They are fully able to sustain them. The assembling of the General Conference of 1792, with the provision for a succession of like order, and the legal division and definition of the powers of General and Annual Conferences placed for the first time in the Discipline of the Church, constitute by every token and in an absolute sense the creation of an institution, (*a*) by deliberate purpose and legislative enactment; (*b*) to meet acknowledged practical necessities, existent then, but not in 1784; and (*c*) to the exclusion and abolition of a rival scheme of general government—the Council—then supposed to be operative, and which had been found inadequate to the exigencies of the Church. From 1792 the General Conference has continued the permanent organ of government in American Methodism; and Annual Conferences have developed on the lines fixed and defined at that date. The two institutions, as known to the law of the Church, were a simultaneous creation at that epoch.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Baltimore Conference System of Government in American Methodism.

It is designed to investigate briefly the intricate and important subject of what we shall venture to call the Baltimore Conference system of government in American Methodism.

In 1780, the Asburyan, Northern, or Baltimore Conference met in Baltimore: the "regular," Southern, or Virginia Conference met at Manakintown, and by the intercession of Asbury, Garrettson, and Watters was reconciled, after the Fluvanna schism, to the Baltimore or Asburyan body, the union being consummated in 1781. *From that date until 1787, the Baltimore Conference was the final Conference of every year, and enjoyed powers and privileges not accorded any other body.* This is the peculiar phenomenon which we desire historically to investigate.

Of the Conference of 1781, Jesse Lee says:

> On the 24th day of April, the ninth conference met in Baltimore. But previous to this, a few preachers on the Eastern Shore, held a *little conference* in Delaware state, near Choptank, to make some arrangements for those preachers who could not go with them, and then adjourned (as they called it) to Baltimore; so upon the whole it was considered but one conference.[1]

And that one Conference was of course the Baltimore. The Minutes published in 1795[2] confirm Lee, saying of the Conference of 1781 that it was "held at Choptank, state of Delaware, April 16th, 1781, and adjourned to Baltimore the 24th of said month." The next year, 1782, Lee explains the governmental relation of the Southern or Virginia Conference to the Northern or Baltimore Conference as follows:

> The work had so increased and spread, that it was now found necessary to have a conference in the south [the Virginia] every year, continuing the conference in the north [the Baltimore] as usual. Yet as the conference in the north was of the longest standing, and withal composed of the oldest preachers, it was allowed greater privileges than that in the south; especially in making rules, and forming regulations for the societies. Accordingly, when any thing was agreed to in the Virginia conference, and after-

[1] Short History, p. 75. [2] P. 41.

wards disapproved of in the Baltimore conference, it was dropped. But if any rule was fixed and determined on at the Baltimore conference, the preachers in the south were under the necessity of abiding by it. The southern conference was considered at that time as a convenience, and designed to accommodate the preachers in that part of the work, and do all the business of a regular conference, except that of making or altering particular rules.[1]

Here we have the final legislative authority fixed in the Baltimore Conference, while the Virginia Conference was practically confined to a narrower and non-legislative sphere. At this very Conference of 1782, the brethren unanimously chose brother Asbury "to act according to Mr. Wesley's original appointment, and preside over the American conferences and the whole work." The Delaware precedent of 1779, and this of 1782, familiarized Mr. Asbury's mind with election by the American Conference, and doubtless suggested to him the alternative of Conference election to the episcopal office in 1784 by which he secured protection against Mr. Wesley's hitherto little questioned supremacy. Dr. L. M. Lee declares[2] that "a preacher in one division possessed the right to sit and vote in the other." Yet we shall fall into one-sided exaggeration and error if we fail to notice that officially these two bodies were still regarded as one Conference, which, according to the Minutes of 1795, was "held at Ellis's Preaching-House, in Sussex County, Virginia, April 17th, 1782, and adjourned to Baltimore, May 21st."[3] Similarly in 1783 the Conference met at Ellis's, May 6, "and adjourned to Baltimore the 27th."[4] This accorded with the appointment of the preceding year, when "it was agreed we should have the next conference in *Virginia*, on the first Tuesday in May following; and the conference in the north in *Baltimore*, on the last Wednesday in the same month."[5] The same system continued to obtain in 1784, at the last Conference held before the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church. According to the Minutes,[6] the Conference was "begun at Ellis's Preaching House, Virginia, April 30th, 1784, and ended at Baltimore, May 28th, following." Lee particularizes:

In 1784, the twelfth conference began at Ellis's chapel, in *Virginia*, on the 30th day of April, and ended in Baltimore, on the 28th of May. It was considered as but one conference, although they met first in *Virginia*, and then adjourned to Baltimore, where the business was finished.[7]

[1] Short History, pp. 78, 79. [2] Life of Jesse Lee, p. 101. [3] P. 49. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 57. [5] Lee, Short History, p. 81. [6] P. 65. [7] Short History, p. 86.

Throughout these years we have a dual session of the Conference, the first in Virginia, preparatory and chiefly executive, and the last in Baltimore, of final legislative authority. It is not without significance that no other place than Baltimore seems to have been thought of as the seat of the extraordinary and called session which is known as the Christmas Conference; and we shall not be able to understand this body in its complete historical setting unless we keep in mind this Baltimore Conference system of government which virtually began in 1780; which was not for a season interrupted or essentially altered by the action of the Christmas Conference in fixing the government of the Church in "the Conference"; and which, as we shall see, did not come to an end until 1787. When the called Conference met in Baltimore on Christmas Eve, 1784, it assembled in the midst of the traditions of the five successive annual legislative sessions of the Conference which had been previously held in the same city. Hence it called itself "a Conference"; hence, without specific creation of a new governing body, or definition of its legislative powers, it was able to commit all the powers of government in the newly organized Church to "the Conference," whose general functions had been so long established and were so familiarly understood, and which, as we shall see, continued for three years after the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church to hold its final legislative sessions in Baltimore, as it had been accustomed to do for five years preceding that organization.

Here we are confronted with a singular phenomenon, of which the very probable, but possibly incomplete, explanation will presently become more evident. Jesse Lee tells us that in 1785, 1786, and 1787, when the annual Minutes first began to be published, the caption in these first three editions of the Minutes was, "Minutes of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America."[1] The term "General Conference," though entirely absent from the three editions of the Discipline of the Church published during these three years, is here applied in the same sense to the Conferences of 1785, 1786, and 1787, when the term is dropped and disappears from the Minutes. In 1785, there were for the first time *three* Conference sessions held—in North Carolina, in Vir-

[1] Short History, p. 118.

ginia, and the final one in Baltimore—though *two*, as we have seen, had for many years been common; and three was the number for 1786 and 1787: of the Minutes of these three years, Lee immediately adds: "The business of the three conferences was all arranged in the minutes as if it had all been done at one time and place." *The use of the term "General Conference" in the caption of the Minutes, therefore, coincides, as to its beginning, with the expansion of the Conference sessions to the number of three, still apparently regarded as one, however; continues during the period when the final session of the three was held in the city of Baltimore; and is abandoned when the sessions are expanded to an indefinite number (six in 1788, eleven in 1789, fourteen in 1790), when the Baltimore session, no longer last, falls indiscriminately as to time in the list, and when the Baltimore Conference thus finally forfeits the primacy which it had enjoyed since 1780.* These are facts, and, upon further consideration, it will be seen that they go far toward constituting a satisfactory explanation of the otherwise inexplicable phenomenon in the heading of the Minutes to which Lee directs our attention.

As the basis of a more minute examination, it will be well to quote the entire passage from Lee:

> In 1785 we had three conferences. The fourteenth conference was held at Green Hill's, in North Carolina, on the 20th of April. The fifteenth conference was held at Mr. Mason's, in Brunswick county, in Virginia, on the 1st day of May. The sixteenth conference was held in Baltimore, on the 1st day of June.
>
> This was the first time that we had more than one regular conference in the same year. For a few years before this, we had two conferences in the same year, but they were considered only as one, first begun in one place, and adjourned to another. Now there were three, and no adjournment. I have therefore considered the conferences as but one in the year, and have numbered them accordingly; but from this time I shall consider the number of the conferences as I find them in the minutes.
>
> This year, and the two succeeding years, the minutes were called, "Minutes of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America."
>
> The business of the three was all arranged in the minutes as if it had all been done at one time and place. And for the first time we had the annual minutes printed; which practice we have followed ever since.[1]

It will be remembered that the regular Conference of 1784 had held its annual sessions in Virginia and Baltimore in the

[1] Short History of the Methodists, p. 118.

spring, some seven or eight months before the called session of that year met in Baltimore at Christmas. Now, these three Conference sessions of 1785, enumerated by Lee, were fixed, not by the called Christmas Conference, but by the regular Conference in the spring preceding, the final question of whose Minutes is:

Quest. 24. When and where shall our next conference be held?

Answ. The first at Green Hill's, Friday 29th and Saturday 30th of April, North Carolina: the second in Virginia, at conference chapel, May 8th; the third in Maryland, Baltimore, the 15th day of June.[1]

These three sessions were actually held, the appointments of the Conference in the spring of 1784 for the Conference of 1785 overleaping the Christmas Conference as if it had not been held. On comparing this answer with Lee, however, it is found that the sessions anticipated the appointed time from a week to fifteen days. It is possible, of course, that this change of time may have been arranged at the Christmas Conference; but against this supposition is the fact that the Conference appointments made at the close of the Minutes of 1785, in which occurs the only record of the proceedings of the Christmas Conference outside of the First Discipline, are for the year 1786:

Quest. 17. When and where shall we hold our conferences next year?

Answ. At Salisbury, 21st of February. At Lane's chapel, in Southampton county, Virginia, Monday, 10th of April. In Baltimore, the 8th of May, 1786.[2]

This action was doubtless taken at the final Baltimore session in June, 1785; but it is worth while to notice (1) that the Conference sessions of 1785 were appointed by the regular spring Conference of 1784; (2) that it is the Conference sessions of 1786 that are recorded at the close of the Minutes which include proceedings of the Christmas Conference with those of the regular Conference sessions of the year 1785; and (3) that the records are silent as to any change of time for the sessions of 1785 made by the Christmas Conference. The much more probable explanation of the hurrying up of the times of meeting is found in the convenience of Dr. Coke, who sailed for England, June 2, and in the slavery agitation which made necessary the speedy repeal of the inopportune action of the called Conference on that question.

We thus see how the Baltimore Conference system went on

[1] Minutes, ed. of 1795, p. 73. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 83.

after the organization of the Church without interruption or essential modification as to principle. After the dissolution of the called Conference of Christmas, 1784, three Conferences, or sessions of the one Conference, met in 1785, appointed by the regular spring Conference of 1784, the last session, as usual, being held in Baltimore, June 1. Here, doubtless, were made the appointments for the Conference sessions of 1786; and here, certainly, as Coke informs us (Journal, June 1, 1785), the minute of the called Christmas Conference concerning slavery was suspended, the Baltimore Conference exercising as heretofore the final legislative authority of the year, though the subject had received previous consideration in Virginia.

Lee says distinctly in the passage cited that from 1785 onward there was no adjournment from Conference to Conference of the year, as we know there had been from Virginia to Baltimore during the years 1781–1784 inclusive. There exists nowhere any record of an adjournment of the called Christmas Conference to the first regular session of 1785; if there had been such an adjournment, it is not a violent presumption that this most exact historian, Lee, according to his habit, would have found it natural, if not necessary, to make record of it. He does expressly record, in this connection, that there was no adjournment in 1785 from North Carolina to Virginia, or from Virginia to Baltimore, thus cutting off the called Conference of 1784–85 from any supposed continuity with the final Baltimore session of 1785. If there was thus no adjournment from session to session of the same year, much less may we suppose there was an adjournment from year to year, *i. e.*, from 1785 to 1786 and from 1786 to 1787. All the information we have detaches the called Conference from the regular Conferences preceding it, and the regular Conferences following it, making it an extraordinary parenthesis in the regular ongoings of the settled Conference government of the American Methodists. Lee, however, makes the cessation of the usual adjournment from Conference to Conference of the same year the occasion of regarding and numbering the several sessions of a year as distinct Conferences; while the annual Discipline of the Church, down to and including the edition of 1791, still knows only "the Conference," as the regular governmental body, and the Minutes of 1785, 1786, and 1787, according to Lee, designate the conjoint sessions,

"the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America."

To be exact and complete, we must now notice a discrepancy between Lee and the earliest collected edition of the Minutes, published in 1795. Not only does Lee give an identical title, as cited, for the three years, 1785, 1786, and 1787; but he says, "The business of the three conferences," of each of these years, "was all arranged in the minutes as if it had all been done at one time and place." For 1786 and 1787 the Minutes of 1795 confirm Lee as to title and contents, except that the words "in America" are omitted from the designation of the Methodist Episcopal Church. But in the case of the year 1785, we find the Minutes in the first collected form of 1795 differing from Lee as to both title and contents. In the Minutes the title runs: "Minutes of Some Conversations between the Ministers and Preachers of the Methodist Episcopal Church, at a General Conference held at Baltimore, January, 1785"; and, in addition to the proceedings of the three Conferences of 1785, as described by Lee, the Minutes of 1795 include certain proceedings of the Christmas Conference which do not appear in the Minutes published by Coke, constituting the First Discipline of the Church. These additional proceedings of the called Conference, recorded in these Minutes, consist of the official record of the ordinations of Superintendents, Elders, and Deacons, at the Christmas Conference; in the case of the elders and deacons the names being given in connection with subsequent ordinations at the regular sessions in the answers to the same minute questions. There is given also a full copy of Mr. Wesley's circular letter, with a few introductory words and a concluding note, in which the "elected superintendent" is termed a "bishop"—a title absent from the Discipline until 1787. The other business of this record appears to have been transacted, and to have been made matter of record, at a time subsequent to the Christmas Conference, *i. e.*, at the regular sessions of Conference in 1785.

We have previously seen reasons why we cannot with certainty push the date of this form of record farther back than 1795, the time of our earliest copy. Examining the document, we find two discrepancies between its title and the facts: (1) it describes the Christmas Conference as "held at Baltimore, January, 1785," whereas it met Friday, December 24, 1784, transacted

the bulk of its business during the last week of that year, and probably closed its business sessions, Saturday, January 1, 1785;[1] (2) the title is an incorrect description of the document which it heads, the body of which contains the record of the transactions at Green Hill's, North Carolina, in April; at Mason's, in Virginia, in May; and at Baltimore, in June, 1785. These obvious discrepancies excite suspicion of a free editorial hand used on this record as published in the Minutes of 1795; and raise an inquiry as to the discovery of any apparent reason or motive for alteration. Now we know from Jesse Lee, in the passage cited above and elsewhere, that from 1785 the "annual minutes" were printed; so that there were contemporary printed minutes of the Conference of 1785, ten years older than the edition of 1795 which has come down to us. Jesse Lee promises us in his History that "the printed minutes," from their beginning in 1785, "will be attended to as they come out year after year."[2] If Jesse Lee kept this promise—and all we know of his accuracy and completeness leads us to believe that he did —*the original printed annual minutes of 1785* did not have the heading of our edition of 1795, but on the contrary one identical with the Minutes of 1786 and 1787; and those first printed minutes of 1785 did not include the matter concerning the Christmas Conference, for Lee says: "The business of the *three* Conferences [of each year] was all arranged in the Minutes [of 1785, 1786, and 1787] as if it had all been done at one time and place."[3]

If Lee, with the original annual Minutes of 1785, 1786, and 1787 before him, has here made his usual correct record, it follows that the editor of the collected edition of 1795 made alterations both in the title and in the contents of the Minutes of 1785. There is reason to believe that Bishop Asbury was this editor; and it is not improbable that the editor dated the Christmas Conference "January, 1785," in order to throw the

[1] Coke dates his account of the Christmas Conference "Friday, Dec. 24–Jan. 2 [Sunday], 1785," and Asbury says, "Monday, January 3, 1785. The conference is risen, and I have now a little time for rest."

[2] Short History, p. 89.

[3] As has been previously noticed, there is no ground for expecting the discovery of any "lost minutes" other than those we have, originally taken at the Christmas Conference; but the finding of the *printed* Minutes of 1785, described by Lee, is an important desideratum.

record he was about to make of it chronologically with the Minutes of that year; while he added the circular letter[1] and other records of the Christmas Conference which had found no place in the original Minutes of that body, published by Coke immediately after its adjournment.

For these reasons, we have been obliged to say in the italicized sentence above, "*The use of the term 'General Conference' in the caption of the Minutes, therefore, coincides, as to its beginning, with the expansion of the Conference sessions to the number of three,*" instead of, "*with the Christmas Conference and the organization of the Church,*" since the evidence, critically canvassed, will not support this latter statement. But if it did, it would still remain true that the term "General Conference" in the first printed annual Minutes is by no means confined to the Christmas Confer-

[1] So far as I am aware, the two earliest texts of Mr. Wesley's circular letter are (1) the printed copy inserted in the original edition of the Sunday Service and First Discipline, which lies before me; and (2) the copy in the collected Minutes of 1795. The copy of 1795 gives certain token that it is not the original, but was carefully edited at a subsequent date: (*a*) No. 1 above has "many of the provinces of North-America are totally disjoined from their mother-country," which the American editor alters in No. 2 to "from the British empire"; (*b*) No. 1 says that the civil authority is exercised "partly by the provincial Assemblies"—No. 2 says "partly by the State Assemblies"; (*c*) No. 1 adds to paragraph 4 the following, wholly omitted from No. 2: "And I have prepared a liturgy, little differing from that of the church of England (I think, the best constituted national church in the world), which I advise all the traveling preachers to use on the Lord's day, in all their congregations, reading the litany only on Wednesdays and Fridays, and praying extempore on all other days. I also advise the elders to administer the supper of the Lord on every Lord's day." In 1795, the liturgy, litany, etc., had long since fallen into disuse, and, if the text in the Minutes published in that year was then edited, we can see a sound reason for this extensive omission. Myles's text (English), in his Chronological History, pp. 161–163, corresponds to No. 1 above; Lee's text (American), in his Short History (pp. 91–93), corresponds to No. 2—an additional reason for supposing that the circular letter was absent from the annual Minutes of 1785, which Lee had, since here he follows the Minutes of 1795. The text in Tigert's Constitutional History (pp. 174, 175) reproduces No. 1 in agreement with Myles.

The discussion of the text above and of this note may seem to some readers a piece of "higher criticism." Perhaps it is. But, from whatever point of view we consider the record of the Christmas Conference in the Minutes of 1795, it grows more and more certain that it is not contemporary, and the more closely the several lines of evidence which lead to this conclusion are inspected, the sounder will the reasoning appear.

ence, but had a latitude of meaning wide enough to include the Conferences of 1786 and 1787. Finally, if Bishop Asbury, in 1795, changed the caption of the Minutes of 1785, and added the edited form of the circular letter and the ordinations of Christmas 1784, to complete the record of the called Conference at Christmas with items omitted from its contemporary Minutes, it is one more proof, almost decisive, that Bishop Asbury had no "lost minutes" from which to glean additional matter.

It is only necessary, in conclusion, to touch upon the collapse of the Baltimore Conference system in 1787, and the disappearance at that time of the "General Conference" heading from the Minutes. In 1787, the South Carolina Conference, at its first session, with Bishops Coke and Asbury presiding, held an episcopal election—a very singular proceeding if it was simply an Annual Conference in the sense of the Discipline—and confirmed Mr. Wesley's nomination of Whatcoat to the episcopacy. At the Virginia Conference following, serious objection to Whatcoat was raised by one James O'Kelly, and it was agreed by the Conference that this nomination should be finally disposed of at the Baltimore Conference, "on condition," as Nicholas Snethen says, "that the Virginia Conference might send a deputy to explain their sentiments." At Baltimore, according to Snethen, in his Reply to Mr. O'Kelly's Apology, "a vote was taken that Richard Whatcoat should not be ordained Superintendent, and that Mr. Wesley's name should for the future be left off the American Minutes." The same Conference restrained Thomas Coke from the exercise of episcopal authority when absent from the United States, and the first question in the "Minutes of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church for the year 1787" is, "Who are the Superintendents of our church for the United States?" and the answer is, "Thomas Coke (when present in the States) and Francis Asbury."

Thus in 1787—not in 1784—the American Methodist Episcopal Church fully and finally asserted its autonomy: thus in 1787 the Baltimore Conference system of government in American Methodism—or the Baltimore General Conference system, if one prefers that title—came to an end. For 1788, six Conferences are appointed; for 1789, eleven; for 1790, fourteen; for 1791, thirteen; and for 1792, sixteen, Baltimore losing its primacy, and falling last by appointment only in 1788, but actually

followed in September by the Philadelphia, which was the seventh and final Conference of that year.[1] In 1789, according to Coke's explicit testimony, the question of the restoration of Mr. Wesley's name in the Minutes was laid before "each of the Conferences" (eleven), and "cheerfully and unanimously agreed" to by "all the Conferences." The result of this action appears in the Minutes and Discipline of 1789, "inserted in such a manner as to preclude" Mr. Wesley "from exercising an unconstitutional power" over the Americans; but how great the latitude of the term "General Conference," or the phrase "general Conference held at Baltimore," employed in making these fresh historical entries, five years after the event, is now too apparent to merit further discussion. *Before* 1792, it was a term elastic enough to include, as we have seen, the Conferences of 1785, of 1786, and of 1787: *after* 1792 the name is restricted to a legal and disciplinary use, which has ever since been its only legitimate unqualified meaning. In 1789 and 1790 Bishop Asbury passed around to all the Conference sessions the measures pertaining to the Council. In 1792 the Conferences called the first General Conference; which provided a successor, or, as Bishop Coke says, "that great blessing to the American Connection—a permanency for General Conferences." At that date, government by "the Conference," whether directly exercised by passing measures around to all the sessions, or more or less modified by the Baltimore Conference system, or by the "Council," passed away forever; and the General Conference has continued without intermission to this day the organ of government in American Methodism—to 1808 supreme and absolute, and since, delegated and limited.

[1] Lee's Short History of the Methodists, p. 135.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

Orders: Roman and Anglican.

Christianity and churchism still struggle in the womb of time! Leo XIII. and his canonists have decided adversely on the validity of Anglican orders. The conclusion reached is that they are not simply irregular, but invalid—ecclesiastically and canonically null and void. Lord Halifax and his friends deluded themselves, and, to some extent, the Church of England, with the hope of papal recognition; and Mr. Gladstone in an able paper appealed to Leo. In their hearts, many of the Anglo-Catholics acknowledge the papal supremacy: in this outward act, having foolishly appealed to Leo, and thus having practically acknowledged his jurisdiction in the case, how shall they reject or nullify or even minify this decision, now that it has gone against them? If its value were inestimable, had it proved favorable, how can it be declared worthless, now that it has turned out to be adverse?

The *Civiltà Cattolica*, for October 3, 1896, contains the Latin text of this adverse papal decision. The grounds of it are enumerated as follows: (1) Letters given forth by Julius III. in connection with Cardinal Pole's Legation imply that ordinations taking place under the rite of Edward VI. had not been duly consummated. (2) Letters of Paul IV., issued in 1555, carry the same implication. (3) In ordaining certain persons previously ordained by the Edwardian rite, the Church of Rome has assumed the nullity of that rite. (4) The Edwardian rite for ordination to the priesthood [or presbyterate] in its original form was decidedly defective as not being sufficiently significant of priestly rank and function. The subsequent addition of the words *ad officium et opus presbyteri*, while as much as admitting the defect of the original form, effected nothing for the validity of Anglican orders, since in the interim valid orders had been lost and the English Church had within herself no power to recover them. (5) The form of episcopal consecration in the Anglican ordinal is defective. Moreover, the episcopate, as being a more excellent grade of priesthood, cannot be validly insti-

tuted where a lapse of priestly orders has occurred, as was the case in the English Church. (6) Reflecting the close connection between belief and ceremonial, the Anglican ordinal excludes characteristic features of the Roman. It contains no open reference to *sacerdotium* or to the power of consecrating and offering sacrifice. (7) While the Roman Church presumes that the "intention," requisite to the validity of a sacramental performance, is present where the Roman rite is used, a divergence from that rite must be taken as a positive indication that the ministrant puts himself in opposition to the Roman Church, and does not intend the ordinance which he executes in the sense of that Church.

That the exact view which Leo XIII. and his canonists take of the relation of the priesthood or presbyterate to the episcopate, and how it differs from the Anglican doctrine, may be seen, we here cite the text of this fifth ground of objection in full:

De consecratione episcopali similiter est. Nam formulæ, *Accipe Spiritum Sanctum*, non modo serius adnexa sunt verba, *ad officium et opus episcopi*, sed etiam de iisdem, ut mox dicemus, judicandum aliter est quam in ritu catholico. Neque rei proficit quidquam advocasse præfationis precem, *Omnipotens Deus;* quum ea pariter deminuta sit verbis quæ *summum sacerdotium* declarent. Sane, nihil huc attinet explorare, utrum episcopatus complementum sit sacerdotii, an ordo ab illo distinctus: aut collatus, ut aiunt, *per saltum*, scilicet homini non sacerdoti, utrum affectum habeat necne. At ipse procul dubio, ex institutione Christi, ad sacramentum Ordinis verissime pertinet, atque est præcellente gradu sacerdotium; quod nimirum et voce sanctorum Patrum et rituali nostra consuetudine *summum sacerdotium*, *sacri ministerii summa* nuncupatur. Inde fit ut, quaniam sacramentum Ordinis verumque Christi sacerdotium a ritu anglicano penitus extrusum est, atque ideo in consecratione episcopali ejusdem ritus nullo modo sacerdotium confertur, nullo item modo episcopatus vere ac jure possit conferri: eoque id magis quia in primis episcopatus munus illud scilicet est, ministros ordinandi in sanctam eucharistiam et sacrificium.

Referring, in the light of this most recent pontifical deliverance, to the "Catechism of the Council of Trent," published by command of Pope Pius V., we find the following enumeration of the several orders of the Roman Church:

Their number, according to the uniform and universal doctrine of the Catholic Church, is seven: Porter, Reader, Exorcist, Acolyte, Sub-deacon, Deacon, and Priest. . . . Of these some are greater, which are also called "Holy," some lesser, which are called "Minor Orders." The greater or Holy

Orders are Sub-deaconship, Deaconship, and Priesthood; the lesser or Minor Orders are Porter, Reader, Exorcist, and Acolyte.[1]

On a later page the same official catechism declares:

The third and highest degree of all Holy Orders is the Priesthood. Persons raised to the Priesthood the Holy Fathers distinguish by two names: they are called "Presbyters," which in Greek signifies elders, and which was given them, not only to express the mature years required by the Priesthood, but still more, the gravity of their manners, their knowledge and prudence: "Venerable old age is not that of long time, nor counted by the numbers of years; but the understanding of a man is grey hairs": they are also called "Priests" (Sacerdotes), because they are consecrated to God, and to them it belongs to administer the sacraments and to handle sacred things.[2]

One more brief quotation from the Roman Catechism will suffice for our present purpose:

The Order of Priesthood, although essentially one, has different degrees of dignity and power. The first is confined to those who are simply called Priests, and whose functions we have now explained. The second is that of Bishops, who are placed over their respective sees, to govern not only the other ministers of the Church, but also the faithful. . . . But Bishops are also called "Pontiffs," a name borrowed from the ancient Romans, and used to designate their Chief-priests. The third degree is that of Archbishop. . . . Patriarchs hold the fourth place, and are, as the name implies, the first and supreme Fathers in the Episcopal order. Formerly, besides the Sovereign Pontiff, there were but four Patriarchs in the Church. . . . The Patriarch of Constantinople, although last in the order of time, was first in rank. . . . Next . . . is that of Alexandria, a see founded by the Evangelist St. Mark. . . . The third is the Patriarchate of Antioch, founded by St. Peter, and the first seat of the Apostolic See; the fourth and last, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, founded by St. James, the brother of our Lord.

Superior to all these is the Sovereign Pontiff, whom Cyril, Archbishop of Alexandria, denominated in the Council of Ephesus, "the Father and Patriarch of the whole world." . . . As the successor of St. Peter, and the true and legitimate vicar of Jesus Christ, he, therefore, presides over the Universal Church, the Father and Governor of all the faithful, of Bishops, also, and of all other prelates, be their station, rank, or power what they may.[3]

The essential oneness of all these five degrees of priesthood, from the presbyter to the pope, appears from the standpoint of the Roman Catechism in this, that all of them stand in the same

[1] Page 216 of the Catechism of the Council of Trent, translated into English by the Rev. J. Donovan, Professor in the Royal College, Maynooth. New York: Catholic Publication Society.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 220. [3] *Ibid.*, pp. 221, 222.

relation to the sacrifice of the mass, the supreme act of worship, and the center of the ceremonial and the sacerdotal power, of the Roman Church. The language of the Catechism strictly and literally interpreted would mean that the priest differs from the bishop only as the bishop differs from the archbishop, and as the archbishop differs from the patriarch, and as the patriarch differs from the pope. The common priesthood has five degrees of dignity. But in view of the facts (1) that sacerdotal power in the mass is chiefly had in view in this declaration, (2) that the power of ordination has always been canonically confined to the episcopate, and (3) that variant opinions of many dogmatists and canonists of high authority have been tolerated on this point of the difference between priests and bishops, it would perhaps be unwise to press this interpretation to its final issue. It is worth while to notice, however, that there is imbedded in the Roman doctrine the primitive tradition of the derivation of the episcopate from the presbyterate, and that the high Anglican doctrine of the essential and inviolable divine distinction between episcopal and presbyterial orders, whereon the Anglicans build their Church and excommunicate other Protestants, finds scant support, if any, in the fundamental doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church.

Some of the principal facts in connection with this complex subject are the following:

1. The scholastics seem to have been inclined to deny that the episcopate is, in the proper sacramental sense, a distinct order from the priesthood (presbyterate or *sacerdotium*). Such representative writers of matured scholasticism as Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventura, and Durandus took this ground.

2. In the sub-scholastic era, though unanimity was not maintained, the scholastic view, in the sense just defined, appears very largely to have colored Roman Catholic phraseology and thinking. In proof of this, reference may be made to the Tridentine documents. In the decrees of the Council of Trent (to be distinguished from the *Catechism*) we find that the second chapter of the twenty-third session has the heading *De septem ordinibus*. It is indeed denied that the heading belonged to the original; nevertheless, the fact of its being inserted and continuously tolerated is significant, as indicating that in the customary way of thinking just seven orders were recognized, the seventh of course

being understood to be the priesthood. Again, in the second canon of this same session we read: "If anyone saith that, besides the priesthood, there are not in the Catholic Church other orders, both greater and minor, by which, as by certain steps, advance is made into the priesthood: let him be anathema." The natural suggestion of this language is that the priesthood is the final stage in the ascending scale of orders. The catechism which bears the name of Trent, though not technically representative of the council, since that body adjourned before it was ready for approval, is fairly presumed to reflect the thinking prevalent among the Tridentine bishops. As has been shown, it makes the priesthood the seventh and final order, the superior dignity which is affirmed for the bishop not being viewed as an attachment of a distinct order. The formal approbation given to the catechism by one and another of the popes, if not placing the seal of infallibility upon all its details, must in any event be regarded as securing to it a high rank as a Roman Catholic standard.

3. But since the sixteenth century a divided verdict has been rendered on the relation of the episcopate to holy orders, and a complete view of the subject requires notice of the fact that the approved Roman Catholic theory makes the episcopate an essential part of a divinely instituted hierarchy, and does not allow that the particulars in which it differs from simple priesthood are matters within ecclesiastical discretion.

On these points and the relation of bishops to holy orders, Thomas Aquinas says:

> Episcopatus ordo esse dici potest, non quatenus sacramentum est ad eucharistiam ordinatum, sed tantum ut est officium quoddam ad sacras et hierarchicas actiones.
>
> Ordo potest accipi dupliciter. Uno modo secundum quod est sacramentum: et sic, ut prius dictum est, ordinatur omnis ordo ad eucharistiæ sacramentum. Unde cum episcopus non habeat potestatem superiorem sacerdote, quantum ad hoc episcopatus non erit ordo. Alio modo potest considerari ordo, secundum quod est officium quoddam respectu quarundam actionum sacrarum: et sic cum episcopus habeat potestatem in actionibus hierarchicis respectu corporis mystici supra sacerdotem, episcopatus erit ordo.[1]

This seems to import that the episcopate is not an order beyond the priesthood, or presbyterate, in the *proper sacramental*

[1] Sum. Theol., III., sup. 40. 5.

sense, but only in a qualified sense, or in virtue of superior governing authority in the Church.

Among modern authorities Gury seems to agree with Aquinas. He says:

> Septem numerantus ordines, scilicet: *Presbyteratus, diaconatus, subdiaconatus, acolythatus, exorcistatus, lectoratus*, et *ostiaratus*. . . . His adde *episcopatum*, et *primam tonsuram* quorum alter est ipsius sacerdotii complementum, altera vero ordo non est, sed dispositio ad ordines, qua quis clericus renuntiatur.[1]

This eminent authority, it will be seen, is in exact agreement with the Tridentine Catechism, cited above. Liguori says:

> Ordo est sacramentum, qua traditur potestas circa eucharistiam rite administrandam. Ordines universim sunt septem: Ostiaratus, lectoratus, exorcistatus, acolythatus, subdiaconatus, diaconatus et sacerdotium. Quod rursus est duplex, minus et majus sive episcopatus. Unde quidam octo numerant.[2]

Liguori is inclined to side with those who make the episcopate an order distinct from the presbyterate or *sacerdotium*. The high valuation given to the authority of Aquinas by Leo XIII., as well as the tenor of his decision on the validity of Anglican orders, is presumptive evidence that he favors the position of the Angelical Doctor. The phrase which Leo cites as descriptive of the episcopate—*præexcellente gradu sacerdotium*—is rather in line than otherwise with the view that associates the episcopate with the priesthood in point of order. Moreover, the command, Back to Saint Thomas! which the pope has sent all along the line of his forces, makes it easy to think that he leans to the view of the Angelical Doctor. It is quite probable, too, that the pope would think twice about the significance of the papal approbation of the Tridentine Catechism before venturing formally to pronounce against its exposition of holy orders in relation to the episcopate. On the whole, there is exceedingly small occasion to look for a papal deliverance of that kind.

We have recently received from the Wesleyan book-steward at London the third edition, revised and enlarged, of Dr. James H. Rigg's "Comparative View of Church Organizations, Primitive and Protestant": London, 1897. At pages 74, 75 Dr. Rigg gives a brief and very satisfactory account of the modern rise of the theory of episcopal apostolic succession in the Church of England. The learned Wesleyan divine says:

[1] Theol. Moral. n. 1415, 1416. [2] Theol. Moral. Lib. 6, Tract. 5, cap. 2, n. 734.

The necessity, however, for formulating this theory [of "apostolico-episcopal succession"] was not discovered until half a century had passed since the separation from Rome of the Reformed Church of England. It had not been maintained or defined in any ecclesiastical decree or *corpus theologicum* of the Church of Rome. It was, as formulated, an invention of the Church of England to meet its controversial necessities when pressed hard by the zealous champions of the Puritan party. These insisted on the divine right of their Presbyterian platform as opposed to prelatic episcopacy. By a notable coincidence, in the very same year, the year of the Armada, to which I have already referred as marking the date when the Reformed Church of England became, by a sudden and sweeping change, Anglo-Catholic, Dr. Bancroft, afterwards archbishop, preaching at Paul's Cross, suggested rather than asserted the divine right of bishops in the Church of England, thus claiming to make good its position against the "divine right" asserted by Rome on the one hand and claimed for the Puritan "discipline" on the other. This was, at the time, an entirely novel suggestion, and involved a desertion of the ground hitherto held by Jewell, Whitgift, and Hooker, and, to quote Mr. Child's language, "appeared to have been enunciated simply, as one may say, to overtrump" the great Puritan controversialist "Cartwright's trick."[1] Shortly afterwards, this view was elaborately set forth and maintained by Dr. Bilson, afterwards bishop of Winchester. It was, however, a startling and very notable change of position for churchmen to take up in Elizabeth's reign. Indeed, Bilson's argument was not only opposed to the views of Whitgift and Hooker before him, but of Andrewes after him, of whose character and authority so much is made by modern churchmen. A distinguished high-church ecclesiastical scholar, Dr. N. Pocock, writing in the *Guardian* in 1892 (November 23), says roundly that "the belief in an apostolical succession in the episcopate is not to be found in any of the writings of the Elizabethan bishops," and that "probably not a single bishop was to be found who believed in his own divine commission [by episcopal descent from the apostles in an unbroken line of ordinations] or in the efficacy [*ex opere operato*] of the sacraments."

In conclusion we desire to say that, not only in view of Leo XIII.'s summary and final condemnation of the validity of Anglican orders and of the general current of the doctrine of orders in the Church of Rome itself, but also in view of the complete disappearance of the dogmatic and historical foundations of the modern Anglican claims upon the first touch of unbiased but thoroughgoing historical criticism, according to universally received canons of investigation, there is as little likelihood and would be as little propriety in the reception of reordination by Methodist Episcopalians at the hands of the bishops of the younger Protestant Episcopal Church as in the reception of

[1] Church and State under the Tudors, by Gilbert W. Child, M.A., p. 238.

Roman reordination by the clergy of the Church of England and its American offshoot. Our surprise at the position of such a man as Dr. Charles W. Shields, of the Presbyterian Church, on this question of the acceptance of the "historic episcopate" scarcely knows bounds. With entire respect for our Protestant Episcopal brethren (and we trust with no breach of Christian charity), but also with perfect frankness, we adopt the language of Dr. Daniel Curry, in the *Methodist Review* (New York) for January, 1897: "That such a proposition should be made by courteous Christian people, without any sense of insolence on their part, shows to what a degree excessive self-appreciation may blunt the soul's best sentiments. . . . The Church of Rome offers as liberal terms to all men—heathens, Jews, and Protestants—as the would-be American Church offers to their confessed fellow-Christians."[1]

The questions here tentatively argued have from a very early date occupied a large place in the literature of Methodism. They begin with John Wesley's statement of the grounds upon which he considered himself a scriptural bishop, and his justification of his exercise of the "power of ordination." Freeborn Garrettson says that it was a "power of ordination" which Wesley sent to America by Coke, Whatcoat, and Vasey. ("Experience and Travels," Philadelphia: 1791; pp. 161, 162, and 197, 198.) In 1804, Dr. William Phoebus wrote an "Apology for the Right of Ordination, in the Evangelical Church of America, called Methodists," which is extensively quoted in Myles's "Chronological History" (ed. 1813), pp. 164, 165. From Myles these citations have passed into the pages of later historians. In 1817, Phoebus also published "An Essay on the Doctrine and Order of the Evangelical Church of America; as constituted at Baltimore in 1784," the full title of which has been cited in the list of the sources of the Christmas Conference. From p. 67 to p. 109

[1] This Appendix has been added since the Preface was stereotyped. Accordingly I can only here make proper acknowledgment of my obligations to my esteemed friend, Professor Henry C. Sheldon, the eminent Church historian, of Boston University, for effective assistance in the collection of materials. My copy of the Latin text of Leo's decision was unfortunately lost in the mails, and the analysis of the grounds of the adverse decision was taken from the original and furnished me by Dr. Sheldon. He has also verified the references to Aquinas, Gury, and Liguori, contained in books at present inaccessible to me.

Phoebus treats at large of Methodist orders and the doctrine of orders in the Anglican Church. In this connection, it is well also to consult the "Memoirs of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, From its Organization up to the Present Day: Containing I. A Narrative of the Organization and of the Early Measures of the Church; II. Additional Statements and Remarks; III. An Appendix of Original Papers. By William White, D.D., Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Second edition. New York: 1836." In addition to his well-known work, "Defense of our Fathers," Bishop Emory wrote another, entitled the "Episcopal Controversy Reviewed," edited and published after his death by his son Robert. The latest Methodist work on the subject is "The Historic Episcopate: A Study of Anglican Claims and Methodist Orders," by Dr. R. J. Cooke, who has a paper entitled "The Ancient British and Ephesian Succession Theories," in the *Methodist Review* (New York) for March, 1898. Estcourt on "Anglican Succession" (London: 1873) is also referred to as a work of value. We have examined it, but have not read it. But this is perhaps a sufficient summary of the literature for those who wish to pursue the subject further.

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THE END.